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[IN DUST AND ASHES.]

FAIR ANNE OF CLY. THE STORY OF A LIFE'S AMBITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Beware of jealousy;
It is a green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on.
Even thus two friends condemned
Embrace and kiss and take ten thousand leaves.
Shakespeare. Ibid.

SWEEP onward by the impetuous tide of bitter thoughts that surged through his brain, Sidney Cardiff, obeying an irresistible impulse, seized Fair Anne with one hand and, clenching the other, raised it on high as if to strike her to the ground.

She uttered a loud cry, which must have been heard, and responded to immediately, for Will Darian and his father dashed suddenly to the spot, and Will, laying one hand on his cousin's shoulder, took her from his grasp with the other, and the up-lifted arm fell.

"Sidney!" said Will, and there was so much reproach in his voice that Sidney felt it more keenly than anger, and he turned with lowered head and sullenly-clenched hands from the still figure at his feet.

Mr. Darian did not speak. He cast one glance at his nephew and one at his daughter, turned his back upon Sidney, and spoke in a husky voice.

"Poor Ladybird!" he said. "I never thought it would have come to this."

Sidney heard the words. His anger was rapidly going, and he could scarce bear the shame that came upon him. He was doubly enraged with himself now, and deeply humiliated he felt in the eyes of quiet Will, who, without any other word of reproach, led his cousin from the room.

They went instinctively towards Sidney's apartment, and, when once in there, Will spoke.

"How did this happen, Sidney?" he asked, quietly.

"She drove me to it, Will," Sidney answered, without lifting his head or his eyes; and now that his passion was gone there was a choking sensation

in his throat and a tremor in his voice. "You know how much I love her, Will. I asked her if she loved me, and she equivocated. I begged her to give me a sober promise that she would be true to me. She was silent. I asked her if she would marry me the day I was going away, that I should leave her my wife and be sure of finding a loving heart on my return. She would not listen to me. I knew why. I had found a miniature she had in her possession, and a letter signed 'Arthur.' Will, I was mad when I produced those things, and I told her she should either be my wife or die!"

"She should consent to comply with your jealous request or you would kill her in your passion, that is it, I think," Will replied. "I am sorry for you. Had any one told me this of you, Sidney, I would have crushed him. Do you not think you were unjust, Sidney, in demanding Anne's consent to be your wife? Think of the life you doom her to! You go away for one or for two years, perhaps for more, and she is left behind, shut up like a prisoner, because her actions would be constrained; unable to go about as she would do while single; anxious for you daily, waiting, hoping for your return, and if anything happens to you there's the most beautiful girl in Cly left desolate and broken-hearted."

Will paused to see if Sidney would answer, but no reply came. He had gradually sunk into a chair and now sat with his arms on the table, his face hidden in them.

"It wasn't the way to make Anne love you, Sid," Will went on, and the reproach in his voice was all the more bitter for its sorrowful gentleness. "You should have spoken to mother, or to Anne before mother. She always loved you, Sid, and would now if you would allow for the little whims and indiscretions of a young girl who is being educated above her station. Look up, Sid; I'm not angry."

"Will, Will!" cried Sidney, with a sob, and there was so much agony and remorse in his voice that Will went to his side.

"Look up, Sid. It will all be well to-morrow. Tell father how it happened, and I daresay Ann will

explain how she came by those things that made you so jealous. Don't think of it. You must know, Sid, that you're loved here by us all."

"I know—I know. Don't go on so, Will; I would rather you would be angry with me. Why did you not strike me down when you came up to me? Leave me, Will; leave me to myself, that I may think over what I have done—what I might have done. Don't let any one come near me, Will, until to-morrow. You can leave me; I shall only be quiet and try to sleep. My mind is confused, my blood burning hot; it is best that I should be by myself."

"Ay, most likely," murmured Will, and hearing his father coming up the stairs he went out of the room, closed the door, and faced his father with a finger of his right hand raised in warning.

"Quiet, father! Do not go in to him now."

Father and son went down to the sitting-room. Only Tommy was there, and he looked painfully troubled about what had happened, though as yet his knowledge of what had really occurred was but vague.

Mrs. Darian was upstairs with Anne. Will inquired after her and Mr. Darian said that she was unharmed in any way and had recovered from the faint.

"What does he say?" asked the farmer, ignoring his nephew's name in his calm anger. "Has he said anything?"

"Not much, father. He seems greatly cut up. He's very wild and excited in his manner. He seems more startled at what happened than ourselves. I should not say anything to him yet."

"I shall not," answered Darian, senior, quietly—so quietly that Will was at a loss to understand how his father took the affair.

"Yes," assented Will; "but all the blame must not be put on Sidney. We know his temper and have never tried it. Anne ought not to have done so. Jealousy is an awful thing, father. I have often thought of it and wonder men do not go mad entirely when their lives are made miserable by such a curse."

"Ay, Will, it is a curse. Many a good heart has been broken through it. Many's the murder that

has been committed through jealousy. Many a poor fellow has been driven to commit suicide through it. Never, Will, let it take hold of you in your lifetime; you had far better slay yourself."

"Knowing this, father, we should think leniently of Sid."

"How did she make him jealous?" asked Darian, senior, and Will told him what little he already knew. The farmer's face clouded a little and he pondered a few minutes in silence, and for the first time since Anne had been sent away he began to ask himself whether he had done right. The questions Madame Marville had put to him came crowding to his brain, and he began to feel the truth of what she had said.

"Ah, I hope mother's misgivings won't come true," he said, inaudibly as he thought, but in reality he spoke the words out loud, so loud that Mrs. Darian, who was then entering the room, heard them.

"I hope not, Philip," said she, with a low sigh. "If I ever gave utterance to my misgivings it was in the hope that they would not come true. I am afraid we were not quite wise. I am afraid that more went on at the academy than you or I or Madame is aware of."

Will here interposed, and said:

"Don't let's doubt Anne, mother. I can't think that she has done any wrong. She may have been silly; then you see most girls like her, placed in the position she was, would be silly. She may have given way to a school-girl's fancy and accepted a miniature and allowed a letter to be written her by some young gentleman who has money enough to buy miniatures every week and time enough to write letters to every pretty girl that smiles at him."

"That may be," said the farmer. "But what occurred to-night must never occur again."

"I don't suppose it ever will," replied Darian, junior, who had some undefined presentiment that it would cause some rapid and unthought-of change in the old homestead.

A gloomy silence lasted now, a silence that existed throughout the farmhouse.

Sidney still kept to his room and was very quiet. The servant-maid had taken up a light to him, but he sent it down, preferring to be in the dark. The stillness and the pale light of the stars accorded well with the tone of his mind. The day's undisturbed reflection was doing its work upon him, filling him with shame, horror, and regret for what had happened, changing the whole destinies of his life—and to what end? That was far too distant in the vista of the future for him to think of now; he dealt with the present. The future, unheeded, will always in time come to be the present, and man was bound to bear whatever fate hurled down upon him.

Sidney heard the family retiring to rest. He thought he would be disturbed, so he threw himself on the bed; but the heavy tread of his uncle never paused outside his door, and Will had enough sense to know that it would be best to let him alone.

Sidney felt relieved, and when the echoes of the heavy feet had subsided he was up again and watching half-listlessly, half-restlessly for the coming of daylight. He fell to dreaming again until his senses were so deadened that he did not hear his room door open and Mrs. Darian glide quietly across the room.

"Sidney, dear," she said, and touched him lightly on the shoulder. The touch and the words startled him, but not seriously. "Why do you sit like this in the dark, and by the window, with the damp air coming in upon you? How much better if you were in bed. Sleep will bring peace and forgetfulness."

"I do not want to sleep, aunt; I am waiting for daybreak," he answered, with a sort of petulant sadness in his voice.

"Daybreak will come soon enough, my dear child; but why do you wait for it so impatiently?"

She half feared then by his manner that he was going to turn sullen, but he was only quiet for the space of a minute or so.

"I shall leave you, aunt, at daybreak. I wish I had gone before this night arrived."

"Leave here, Sidney! Where will you go?"

"To London."

"It must not be, Sidney; you will not go so soon?"

"Yes, I shall, aunt. Why should you wish to stay me? Think of what has happened and tell me if you feel in your heart that I could remain here. I cannot see Anne again, at least not yet. I know too that uncle will never look upon me as he has done. No, no, aunt, it is no use thinking that I can, for I can't stay." He looked up at his aunt's quiet face and his own voice trembled a little. "It was not quite my fault, aunt; she drove me mad, for I was mad. Heaven forgive me! But then think of my love, aunt, my love for Anne ever since we have been together."

Mrs. Darian saw the tears running down his cheeks then. He had not seen enough of the world to be cold and callous yet, or he might have done worse than wept.

"Do you think, Sidney, that for one indiscretion we who have loved you so well could withdraw our af-

fection from you now? Think less of what has happened, sleep off the nervous excitement that distracts your bosom, and to-morrow we can talk quietly of this. Anne will forgive you. You need not ask me, Sidney. Your uncle will forget all about it in a few days; to see that you regret what has happened will be sufficient for him."

"No, aunt. I am sure if you had been sitting here as many hours as I have, thinking over this, you would agree with me. What happened to-night will make a breach between Anne and myself. Uncle will think more of it while I am always about here. No, aunt, absence will efface the memory of my madness, and I can come back then. It is easier to forgive what is forgotten."

Mrs. Darian saw the uselessness of opposing his wishes entirely, the quiet determination of his tone assured her of that. She knew that he was a very deep thinker, and deep thinkers are not very easily shaken in a resolution, the result of careful reflection and calculation.

"You are not of age yet, Sidney. Your uncle, I fear, will not be disposed to give up to you your money until you are."

"I do not want it, aunt. I have no right to it, seeing that you have never paid yourself one farthing for the trouble and expense incurred through me. But he will give me some, if it's only a little, to start with and a little to live on in that great city, until I begin my career in earnest; if not, I go as I am."

"What if Anne comes to you for a reconciliation, and explains all that was the cause of—of your anger?"

"What good would it be? You can't blame her so much, aunt. Remember, she's been educated and finished off as a lady. She has done all that is necessary for a woman. I have not begun yet. I am stuffed and crammed with classical learning and dead languages, I can write French and read German as well as English; but what of that? It's all nothing for a man; he is supposed to do all this and then begin his life in the world. I must get a position for her and myself. She will think better of me when I am gone, better still when I am working for a position. Aunt, promise me you will speak to uncle, that I shall go as I wish without having any leave-taking, or I will go like a thief in the night and leave no trace of my destination."

Mrs. Darian in her heart quite concurred with Sidney, but she had a woman's fears of young men going from their homes and a love that made her wish to keep him near her.

She promised to speak to Mr. Darian, to let Sidney do as he wished as far as she was concerned, and then left him.

It was still dark, and Sidney, growing weary of waiting and watching for daylight, fell fast asleep on his bed and lay there without waking till long past the usual breakfast hour.

Anne was late too before she came down, but Sidney never came down at all that day.

Mr. Darian took no notice of that.

"Let him sulk," he said, with a sort of stubborn pride, "the lad was in the wrong, and shall we go and beg of him to be sociable?—not exactly."

Will heard the words and sighed. He saw that Anne assumed the airs of a deeply-injured party, and while this state of things lasted he saw no chance of making things right.

He went to Sidney's room about midday, and was considerably surprised to find the place in a state of litter anduddle.

Sidney had got all his personal property heaped about the floor of the room, while he was packing a big box with the things he most treasured, and the clothes not wanted for immediate use.

"Well, Sid," said Will, speaking as kindly as ever, for he was touched by his cousin's white, sorrowful face, "what are you doing? I thought you were simply sulking."

"No, Will, I never sulk."

"Then why don't you come downstairs?"

"Because, Will, I can stay up here without sulking. No, I can't go downstairs amongst you. I know what it would be before even I could express any regret. Uncle would meet me with black looks, and Anne would get out of my way, and poor Tommy would be half-afraid of me, and that would only make me sullen and hardened; so I shall stick to my resolution."

Will mildly inquired what that might be.

"To leave here—to leave Clyff at once, Will, or at latest at dusk. I shall only take my little hand portmanteau with me; I know you will send my box on to London."

"Has it come to this?" said Will, much regretting it. "Is our home going to be broken up in this way? Sidney, you have not thought of what you are doing."

"What I am doing, my dear Will, is the result of many hours' thinking."

"And what is it you are doing, Sid? Going to leave us all in hot anger—going, if you can, without even an adieu—going, taking with you the ill feelings of last night? Is this the way to set the matter right?"

"Don't, Will. Don't speak like that."

He stayed to think over his Cousin Will's words, but the same pale, resolute cast came over his face and he was not to be shaken. All the arguments he had used with his aunt he now repeated, added to which he must go sooner or later to begin work, why not now?

Will, in his rough, honest way, would have shown many reasons why not now. But he saw his arguments would be useless, and so gave in with a sigh.

He found Mr. and Mrs. Darian in close conversation about Sidney when he got downstairs. The farmer was listening to his wife in a manner so dogged that she saw it was his intention to let Sidney have his own way.

"Maybe the lad's right," he said, with a thoughtful frown. "I don't think I should quite forget last night if he were to remain in the house. I will give him his letter of introduction to Saxon, Coburg and Company, and let him start on his road to position. The sooner the better; it will make a man of him and more fit to be a husband. He shall draw the interest of his money, a hundred and twenty pounds a year or thereabouts, until he is of age, then he'll do as he likes with the capital."

Will turned away when he heard his father's decision.

The farmer, thinking enough had been said on the subject, walked upstairs to Sidney's room and tapped at the door. There was a reluctant "Come in," and Mr. Darian strode in. Sidney, with a flush of shame on his face, turned away his head.

"Well, Sidney, lad, you're going to show us how you regret your madness last night by breaking up the association, feeling that while the remembrance is too strong upon you you'll feel a shame not altogether easy to bear. Well, you're wise in what you do, and I'm not going to prevent you by word or deed. I want to know if you still entertain the idea of becoming an engineer, mechanical, civil, or both, as the case may be?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Very well; you know I wish it, because it may make a gentleman and a man of you. I shall let you have the letters to start you, and power to draw monthly the interests of the money invested for you, and I trust you will not neglect the splendid opportunities now before you. When do you go?"

"At dusk, uncle."

"Will you have the gig?"

"No, thank you. I should like to walk to the station, and, uncle, please don't let Anne know this till I am gone."

"As you please. But mind you, Sidney, before you go, recollect and understand that you go by your own free will and wish; that no one except yourself thought of this, that no one else wished it or suggested it; that we all regret as much as you do what has happened, and are all grieved at this result. Still there is time to recall your determination, to do something else less like going for ever from the old place. There is plenty of time to say you won't go."

The massive face of the farmer softened in expression as he spoke, there was a wistfulness in his look too plain for Sidney not to see it, and it went through him like a knife, but he would not give way.

"No, uncle, I shall not alter my intention, it is better I should not, as you will think when I'm gone."

"We never know what we shall think, Sidney. Well, you have no one to think of but yourself; do not alter your mind on our account. I shall be with you before you go."

He turned round, perhaps to hide a tremble of the lips, and hesitated for a minute as if still expecting Sidney would relent; but Sidney only said: "Very well, uncle," and the farmer left the room and went slowly downstairs.

At twilight Sidney was ready for his departure; he had not much to encumber him, only a small portmanteau, a travelling cloak and an umbrella.

Mr. Darian was in his room, so was his wife.

The farmer gave to Sidney the promised letters, thirty pounds in gold and notes, with the comforting information that he could draw a month's money from the bank in London as soon as he arrived.

"Good-bye, Sidney," said the farmer, taking his nephew's hand and squeezing it heartily. "Heaven prosper you. This will be the same home for you whenever you return as it is now."

Sidney found the parting less easy than he thought it would be.

Mrs. Darian had been a mother to him. She came now like one to wish him a tearful adieu. She took him to her breast. There was a brief, fervent embrace.

One thought of regret Sidney felt—a sudden wish that it had been otherwise, but the tremor passed away and with it the regret. The parting was over then, one of the most painful kind, for it was in silence and tears.

Will was outside the farmhouse with the portmanteau in his hand, waiting for Sidney, who at the door was stopped by Tommy.

As yet Anne had not made her appearance.

No one had told her Sidney was going so soon.

It was with slow reluctance that Sidney walked through the farm, mentally taking leave of all those things that association had made so dear to him.

Fancy made him think that the old homestead and its surroundings never looked so peaceful and so homely as it did now, with the varying shadows of twilight playing upon its time-discoloured walls and grand old trees—trees of that kind which always make English woodland scenery so picturesque.

Will watched his cousin in silence, and saw that he often looked back upon any familiar spot, as though he were wishing it a long and somewhat sad farewell.

He did not leave the farm by the path, but wandered out over the grounds, perhaps to make the journey longer; but the walk that at any other time would have been a tiring distance was now painfully short to him, and having at last arrived in a lane that separated the farm from other property, he paused; but his eyes were fixed on Will, not turned back upon the old homestead that seemed peeping through the trees and the gloom to bid him a welcome back.

"Will, don't come any farther."

"Why not, Sid? It's hard to part at all—why part so soon?"

"It is best so, Will. You have come a long way, and it only prolongs the pain of parting. I am in the mood to be alone, Will, that I can reflect and look about me, for I might never come back again."

They stood now hand-in-hand, Will still keeping the small trunk, that Sidney should not take the burden too soon.

"You will write to me, Sidney?"

"Yes, Will."

"Often, too, I hope."

"Once a week at least. And you will tell me in return what is going on—all about, about—"

"Anne? I shall look after her now."

"Thank you, dear Will. I shall come back a different man to what I am. Remember, I am going to make the best use of my talents. I hope I shall not try in vain."

"You try in vain!" said Will, with a sublime faith conveyed in his tone and look. "No, Sid, if you stick to your intentions you will come back a genius."

"If the world would think as you do, Will! But time will show. It is getting dark now, and you had better return. I shall wander on in my disconsolate way until I tire of the country, and then I shall start for London. Good-bye, Will; I shall never forget our love. I can't look back. Tell me, is the old home still in sight?"

They had wandered on down the lane.

"Yes, Sid, and it looks peaceable and quiet. There is a bright ray of the fading sun's reflection playing beneath Anne's window, and I fancy I can see the canary hopping about in the cage."

"Enough, Will. Good-bye again. Don't mind my going. We can always meet in a day or two, and I shall come back soon."

"Ay, it will all be forgotten then, Sid, and they'll think more of you now you're gone. Heaven bless you, Sidney. It's hard to part, but the pain of lingering is greater than the pang that separates us. Good-bye."

Shaking hands was not sufficient now.

They had one farewell embrace, and Sidney strode away, with a big tear that was not his own lingering on his cheek.

CHAPTER VII.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.

Keats.

THE young viscount turned with a laugh of scorn, as Charlotte Nupton caught him by the arm to detain him. Had she not been entitled to the respect her sex claims from man he would have turned savagely upon her. Anger—a calm, warning anger—lurked in the fire of his black eyes, a calmer but more dangerous anger in his voice.

"Take your hand off me, Charlotte Nupton, please. Be careful lest you anger me beyond control," he said, with that quiet upon him that seemed to madden the woman. "Why are you here on my uncle's grounds?"

"I am here, my lord, because I have followed you. I will hunt you about that you may see my misery and have it kept in your mind who was the cause of it."

"You act well," answered Arthur, as quietly as before. "Your looks and actions are superb, but they have no interest for me. I thought you knew me better; you ought to."

"Yes, yes," she said, quickly, and with a taunt in her voice. "I ought to know you better. Pale-faced, effeminate boy that you seem, you have the callous heart and mind of a demon. Oh, Heaven! I feel now that I could hate you as deeply as I once loved you."

"Loved!" interrupted the young nobleman, laughing again. "Boy as I was I had too much good sense to be ensnared without being able to extricate myself and I watched you closely, as I did your brother, the so-called Captain Silvester, known as James Sunning-burt, gamester and betting-man. But there, let the past rest as it should do. I never wish to see you again; you would do wisely in letting me fade from your memory. I shall leave you now and I hope for ever. I have told you it will be dangerous for you to follow me, as you say you have done. If you are in want, and I can see it is so, take this money and use it well. I happen to have a cheque for thirty pounds about me. It is payable to bearer—take it."

"Not like that, my lord; I cannot take it like that. Have you no kind word for me, no kind look?"

She came still nearer out of the shadows that surrounded her and went close to him.

Her pale face, still plaintively beautiful, would have touched a stranger's heart to tears, but the young viscount looked at her with his characteristic quiet, quite unmoved.

"Have I spoken unkindly?" he said. "I have told you it is useless to follow me. I never expected to see you again, and you can well do without me. Good-night."

He held out the money towards her.

She did not stretch forth her hand to take it. Her head was bent, and her arms hung listlessly down for a moment.

The cheque fluttered to her feet, and the viscount turned away, and then she stood erect.

"Let me have the same strength of power to hate as I had to love," she said, bitterly, and her eyes flashed fire. "And you, pale-faced boy, shall remember this night as bitterly as I shall!"

"Harsh words, young woman," said the bluff voice of the admiral. "And pray who are you?"

The old gentleman was now occupying the place of his nephew, who had gone out of sight.

"I am Charlotte Nupton, sir," answered the woman, with a courtesy of exquisite grace.

He repeated the name with a half-step back, indicating that the name was familiar to his ears, and that he was surprised to hear it spoken there.

"You were," said he, with a slightly bewildered air, "just now in conversation with my nephew. I can understand the meeting now that I know your name. Charlotte Nupton, why are you here? why has he left you in this manner? Do you not think it's better to let bygones be gone? That London scandal, might have sullied his name for ever!"

"Sir," answered Charlotte Nupton, with a painful tremor in her voice, "look at me; penniless but for that he hurled at my feet, in tatters, and hungry; brought to this by your pale-faced nephew. Was I wrong or unjust to seek him—to implore his help, which should have been kindly given?"

"No, you were not wrong, madam," said the old sailor, his honest, impassioned heart touched by the beauty and the supplication of the woman. "Is then the story that got about true? Look at me, girl; don't flinch, don't equivocate. Tell me, was most of the fault yours, or is my nephew an untruthful as well as an unmitigated scamp?"

Charlotte Nupton looked Sir Francis in the face, and she did not flinch. She answered him, and did not equivocate.

"If he tells you what he told the world, yes. To excuse himself he accuses me of luring him on as no woman could to a shameful destruction. What would you say to that?"

The admiral turned away. His fiery temper was rising; but the pain of what he heard smote him too deeply to let his anger have its vent.

It was hard, sadly hard, to believe so much shameful wrong could be done by his only sister's son, the pale boy that seemed so quiet, so plaintive and so good.

Charlotte Nupton, taking advantage of the old man's mental distress, told her tale with a sad and bitter sorrow, so real that it seemed impossible to be anything but truth.

The admiral's noble, generous heart seemed to swell until he felt that his breast could scarcely contain it. Never in his life had he been brought face to face with a woman who touched his pity and brought out his sympathies like this one. Like most men who would bravely serve their mortal term without the comfort and companionship of the other sex, he

treasured them as sainted idols, precious as a gift from Heaven, made to love and for love, as men are made to labour for their protection and their care.

"It is best that you should not see him any more. Though I do not expect to heal your wounded heart by the gift of money, still it will serve you to keep from him, and from want. You say you go to-morrow on to London, will you promise to write me your address when there and my solicitor shall speedily convey to you my wishes? Have you enough money for your journey? Nay, do not say yes. Here is a little gold, take it, and that cheque, it will be of use in town."

"Heaven bless you, sir."

"Tut, tut! Let me send some one to conduct you to the hotel. Write without delay and you shall hear that an old man's love for a graceless boy shall not stand in the way of justice."

"I have not far to go, sir. I would rather go alone. Again I bless you, and henceforth I keep from his path, as I hope he will keep from mine and from other wrongs."

She snatched at the admiral's sturdy hand and kissed it before he could prevent her, and while he stood still in astonishment she glided away.

It was a slow, reluctant walk that took Sir Francis Moonlake back to his villa. His heart and head were burning, heated by the fire of indignation and distrust. He had a singular, perverse wish upon him now. Though he was anxious to get at his nephew he hoped he would perhaps have left the house, as he would thus avoid the danger of a storm.

But Arthur, never suspecting Charlotte Nupton and his uncle had met, and perhaps not caring if they had, was waiting thoughtfully for the return of the admiral.

The deadly paleness of the veteran's face struck the viscount as being singular, and he elevated his eyebrows interrogatively.

Sir Francis avoided his nephew's glance and sat down in silence, and the silence lasted so long that Arthur was forced to speak.

"What is the matter, uncle?"

"What do you expect is the matter, sir?"

And the old fellow jumped up. "Then the abruptness with which he spoke and the agitation of his manner convinced the young viscount that something was wrong."

"I cannot surmise, uncle," he said, quietly.

"Well, then, sir," blurted out Sir Francis, and his eyes grew round and prominent as he spoke, "I have seen that poor woman whom you have left to fight helplessly against the world. I have spoken to her and she to me, and my heart bleeds—bleeds, I say—for her. Poor thing, her white, girlish face would haunt me, were I you, and my heart would be torn to pieces!"

"Indeed, Sir Francis!" The handsome boy got up as he spoke, and there was more of subdued anger in his voice than there was shame in his manner. "I do not wonder at anything that she may cause. My heart bled once, but never again, thank you."

"Arthur, Arthur!" cried the admiral, in a perfect agony of mind, "do not speak of this with levity."

"I know that she would like to frighten me into behaving as if what she said were true. If she is right, if I am the villain she would represent me, let her go to law; I am willing that she should, and I do not fear publicity or justice."

"Worse and worse! Go to law! Can you, as a man, repeat that you would have that poor, delicate girl driven to such an extremity? Oh, shame, Arthur! You would break my heart if you were to compel me to believe all that has been said about you is true, and I cannot quite doubt this poor creature, yet it is hard to think my sister's boy is an untruthful scamp."

For the first time since they had met a hot flush mounted Arthur's pale cheeks and his eyes flashed; but the signs of anger died out as rapidly as a flash of light passes away, and he spoke with the quiet that was worse than passion.

"Uncle, I will tell you the story in a few words of how we—I and Charlotte Nupton—met, how long I was her dupe and victim, and what I found her to be."

"I will not hear you. I will not, I say. I know sufficient, quite sufficient, and I will hear nothing but repentance. I have taken you to my heart, Arthur, and loved you. Heaven knows I would shield you from your father and the world, but not unless you come to me with truth over this affair."

"If to admit all that woman asserts is what you would have for truth, the truth will be unspoken by me. You will not hear me. You doubt what I have said, and if you cannot think of me as you should think of your sister's son it is better we should never meet again. I see it is indeed time I should go."

"Yes, sir, it is indeed time that you did. I shall have to tear you out from here," and the old man

struck his breast above the region of his heart. "But you shall go, I will not have your face near me while the taint of such sin is upon you."

"You have said enough, Sir Francis, even were I all you deem me to be to send me from you. I shall go, uncle, and when I can again put my foot over the threshold of your door it will be when Sir Francis Moonlake sends for me. Good-bye."

His lips quivered a little as he turned from the irresolute face of the old man, but his step was quick and firm as ever, and in an instant Arthur had left the apartment, and in another he was traversing the hall.

"Don't let him go, Sir Francis," said the voice of Tanner, and a very sharp voice it was too at that moment. "It ain't quite right to believe everybody instead of him."

"Who told him to go, you old idiot? did I? Go fetch him back at once. Hi! hi! I say, Arthur, you scamp, come back, sir."

But there was no answer from below. Tanner limped away with all his might, but he could not see the viscount, and he came back with a very downcast look to his master, and all the consolation he could give was conveyed in these words:

"It's no good, Sir Francis; he's quite gone."

"Leave me, Tanner. Shut the door. Remember I won't be disturbed to—tonight."

As Tanner went out his brave-hearted old master sat down in a great easy-chair to rest his face in his hands and weep like a woman, and all for love and sorrow for his sister's misguided boy.

The dusk that closed in the eve of Sidney Cardiff's departure hung gloomily over the sad, silent figure of the fair beauty of Cly. She had gone out of the room in petulant anger against Sidney, thinking to make him suffer the pangs of jealousy and self-reproach by her absence, determined to keep from him for days if she could. It is so easy to give pain to those who are ever about us! But often the thought of losing the object of our quiet spite and resentment causes all to be forgiven and forgotten. But Anne never thought of what was going to happen. She came home gay and singing, hoping in fact that he might hear her splendid voice and its lively strains.

Her song stopped and her gaiety fled when she saw her mother's pale, tear-dimmed face and her father's great sadness. Almost fearing to ask what had happened, she crept softly upstairs to go to her room, and passed Sidney's door. It was open; the room untidy, the box belonging to him was locked and directed to London, his small trunk and travelling cloak were gone. So now the truth forced itself upon her with a shock like that of an invisible thunderbolt.

Her heart swelled, her eyes filled, and, pale and trembling, she descended the stairs.

"Mother, tell me what is the matter—when—where is—"

"Sidney, my dear, has left us, perhaps for ever. He has gone across the meadows towards the railway, from there he goes to London. He has left no letter nor words for you but these: 'Tell Anne, when I am gone, I shall try to become a great and better man for her; if I fail my feet will never again touch the soil of Cly.'"

Scarcely heeding her mother's words, Anne sped out of the house. She traced the track of his and Will's footprints. But the track was a long one, the black shadows of night were coming on and she feared to go too far. She called upon Will's name, in the hope that he might hear her, and he did; but he came to her alone. Sidney was indeed gone, and in silence brother and sister returned, finding a melancholy relief in the dull echoes of their rapid footsteps.

In sight of the farmhouse, Anne sat herself down upon a moss-covered stone, and Will went on, leaving her to think over the blank that had fallen upon them.

The old homestead felt Sidney's absence sorely. After the first day Will became silent and dull, and Farmer Darian seemed unsettled when he came home and saw the empty chair in the old chimney corner.

Sidney had been the life of the house. His ready, lively conversation and his love for reading and willingness to read out to the family had made him a companion to them all.

He was clever on the flute too, and played the violin better than many who got their living by it. There was no flute, no violin now. The cards were put away, and the draught-board kept untouched, for no one cared to play. They preferred to talk of him.

There was a marked change in Anne too. She was more silent and petulant than ever, and allowed her mind to dwell upon the most uncharitable things concerning Sidney that she could possibly think of.

He had gone and left her, had sent no letter, given no message. He would live with the people in the great city of London and forget her.

Earl Dalyell met her one day, promiscuously, and he noticed and mentioned the pallor of her cheeks and the slight sadness of her smile. He was scrupulously gentle towards her, tenderly flattering. He spoke of those at home, and of Sidney. He pretended to feel no surprise at hearing of her cousin's departure, and commented so highly and emphatically upon the injustice of her parents' compelling her to think of Sidney for her future that Anne began to feel that she deserved a better fate.

The Earl of Dalyell made her promise to pay a short visit to the Hyde. He said that he should like her so much to see his collection of bric-a-brac, so she went with him, and he led her, with the house-keeper in attendance, over the splendid building.

Dazzled and bewildered by the grandeur of the place, flattered by the great man's attention, Anne's head was in a whirl and she scarcely knew what she said to him. He spoke of the dignity and position of the lady whose good fortune it might be to become mistress of the splendid house, and then asked Anne how she would like to be the lady of the Hyde.

He had a confused reply from her, that showed him that she would readily cast aside even love to obtain such an object. He saw that she was proud and ambitious. He saw beside that she was beautiful and he thought of the hated son who might come and snatch her from him and triumph.

Bold in his vain pride of person and birth, he drove Anne back to her father's house.

The farmer was there, and marvelled much at seeing his daughter in company with the proudest man in the county.

Gently handing Anne out of the carriage, the Earl of Dalyell gave her over to Mrs. Darian, and then turned and shook hands with the farmer. It was not the kind of shake that Darian liked, his rough palm liked more than the tips of the gloved fingers, but he was surprised at the condescension of his lordship. His lordship was surprised at the sturdy, unpretentious pride of the honest farmer who could, while in his own house, look any man proudly in the face.

While Anne, still flushed and excited, told her mother of her visit, his lordship explained it to Mr. Darian.

"I hope you will not look upon the step, Mr. Darian, as a liberty, for the feelings of respect I hold both for you and your daughter are most sincere."

"Your lordship does me too much honour," replied the farmer. "If I have anything to complain of it is that my daughter will allow her head to be turned by such notice and forget that her parents are only farmers."

"That I am sure she never will, Mr. Darian. And I think you do Miss Darian an injustice in feeling that she is not equal to attentions from such as myself."

Then the earl added, in his most oily manner:

"Mr. Darian, will you walk a few steps with me?"

"Yes, my lord, with pleasure."

They left the threshold of the farm and strolled out amongst the grounds, and after his lordship had commented upon the management of the gardens and state of the farm he broke a pause very gracefully by saying:

"My dear Mr. Darian, I have had the pleasure of seeing your daughter at Madame Marville's and am pleased to say that in all cases I could not but admire her, not only for her personal beauty, but for her sterling qualities, her accomplishments, her learning, and her purely ladylike instincts, her natural pride and gentleness of heart. As the father of so much beauty and goodness, you must feel that she would be a treasure—ay, to a prince, therefore doubly a treasure to such as myself. And after mature deliberation I have come to ask you a very serious, yet, I trust, a pleasant question."

"I shall be happy to hear it, my lord."

"Then it is this: Will you consent to your daughter Anne becoming my wife, Lady Dalyell, and mistress of the Hyde?"

"Your wife, my lord!" gasped Mr. Darian.

"Yes, Mr. Darian, I ask it. I have that sober respect and mature affection more lasting and more likely to make her happy and contented than a boy's flitting love. Of all the women I have seen there is not one I should like to share my now solitary home with so well as your fair daughter. I have long contemplated this, and again I ask your consent, Mr. Darian, to let fair Anne be my wife, the Countess of Dalyell."

(To be continued.)

LONGEVITY OF SOME ANIMALS.—Among other spoils which Alexander the Great took from Porus, an Indian king, was a monster elephant. Those animals were then, as now, held in the highest esteem in that country. That particular elephant fought so bravely for his master that the admiration of the conqueror was excited in his favour. He

ordered him to be set free, and allowed to range at pleasure; first naming him Ajax, and placing a medal securely to his neck bearing this inscription: "Alexander, son of Jupiter, dedicated Ajax to the sun." Three hundred and fifty-four years after the old fellow was rediscovered, and probably in good condition, as nothing was recorded to the contrary. Therefore, it is probable that elephants may live several centuries before the machinery of life gives out. Cuvier, the great French naturalist, saw no reason why whales should not reach a thousand years. An eagle died at Vienna that was known to be one hundred and four years old. Ravens have been active at one hundred years. A skeleton of a swan is in possession of an English gentleman that died when two hundred and ninety years of age. Tortoises have been repeatedly found with dates cut into their shells by ancient hunters, showing they were over one hundred, and yet were crawling on vigorously with new markings into a second century.

THE OLD LIBRARIAN.

In a pleasant cottage, white and small,
The old librarian doth dwell—
A gray-haired man, upon whose brow
Deep furrows of life's history tell.

He used to be a pedagogue,
But that was years and years ago,
And many youths to manhood grown
Should thank him now for what they know.

He had a way of driving in
The knowledge which he would instil,
And seemed to understand just how
To educate one 'gainst his will.

The whips he used were supple birch
With knots not whittled smoothly down,
And those to whom they were applied
Were quick their conquering power to own.

Yet, somehow, 'e'en the rudest boys
On whom he oft displayed his ire
Liked the old pedagogue, and spoke
With reverence of the learned sire;

And now, though many years have passed
Since the old teacher dropped his whips
And left the school, their grateful hearts
Pour forth their love through smiling lips.

Now in the village library
He spends the evening of his days,
And strives to add to others' joys
In many intellectual ways.

He tells the boys what books to read,
He tells the girls what books to shun,
And has a pleasant word and way
For rich and poor—for every one.

In all the country round about,
Where'er his honoured name is known,
The old librarian reigns within
A peaceful empire of his own. C. D.

SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMONDS.—The Hon. Theophilus Shepstone has pointed out that Africa, south of the equator, consists of a great central, irregularly shaped basin, the outer edge of which varies in height from 4,000 to 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, and that through this rim the Orange River to the southwest, and the Limpopo River to the northeast, cut their way. It is near the exit of the former, from the enormous basin, that the diamond fields lie, while gold in large quantities is being obtained from the northeastern district. In consequence, he now conjectures that this basin is the dry bed of an enormous inland sea, and that the diamonds which are found in it are formed by carbonic acid gas, ejected by the action of subterranean heat through fissures in the earth's surface, into the bed of the dried-up sea, the water of which was sufficiently deep to imprison and liquefy the gas after its evolution. The discovery of the process by which this liquid gas became crystallized, whether by electric or magnetic current, or by the potent influence of iron in some of its numerous forms, must be left to future scientific investigations. Dr. Robert Mann, late Superintendent of Education in the Colony of Natal, states that, since the serious working of the diamond fields in 1871, large numbers of diamonds had been obtained, and it was estimated that in 1872 there were no less than 20,000 miners engaged in searching for them. So large had been the yield that a very material diminution had been brought about in the value of the larger gems in the home market, and the diggers are now leaving the diamond fields for the more profitable northeastern gold fields. The result of the discovery of these fields has been to develop South African commercial enterprise, and to civilize the wild tribes in that part of the continent.



[LADY MAUD'S INDIGNATION.]

THE DOUBLE BONDAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Lost Coronet," "Elgiva," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLII.

And though at times impetuous with emotion
And anguish long repressed,
The swelling heart heaves moaning like the
ocean

That cannot be at rest,
We will be patient and assuage the feeling
We may not wholly stay.

It was some hours after the startling revelation that has been recorded in the last chapter, and Bernard, Lord Brunton, had returned to the Hove. There was a deep, uneasy gravity in his looks and air that spoke of a mind ill at ease with itself as well as suffering from some recent and serious trouble.

And when, as he entered the library that was usually considered to be his private and especial sitting-room, he saw Lady Maud quietly sitting in a chair near his own usual resting-place, he involuntarily recoiled from the contact.

"Maud, I did not expect to find you here," he exclaimed, somewhat sharply. "You seldom honour this grave apartment with your presence," he went on, rather bitterly.

"Perhaps not, my good brother," she returned, quietly. "Only in this case I had a special object. I was waiting for you to return. Of course you were with Gwenda," she added, with a faint smile.

"There was scarcely an 'of course' in the case," he remarked, coldly, "but, as it happened, you are right. I have come from Fern Place probably for the last time."

Lady Maud fairly started, though there was far less visible emotion to be perceived in that self-possessed girl, whose deep mourning garb appeared to have changed the whole character of her beauty, than had been once the constant habit of the bright young daughter of the Dorringtons.

But this was too startling an announcement for the calmest to hear in silence, and she exclaimed, hastily:

"Good Heavens, Bernard, are you jesting? Have you and Gwenda quarrelled—and after all that has passed between you? Impossible. You must have tried her sorely, for I know she loved you dearly."

Lord Brunton gave an angry, impatient stamp of the foot which was at the moment engaged in kicking some innocent papers that had fallen upon the floor.

"Maud. It must be told sooner or later, so I may as well answer you at once. All is over between Gwenda and myself, and from an absolute necessity,

though perhaps no real fault of hers. I believe she was deceived as well as myself."

"Deceived in what?" exclaimed the girl. "In her fortune, or her feelings to you?"

"Neither; but in her birth. Do you know what her parentage turns out to be, Maud?"

Lady Maud shook her head with a questioning look.

"You certainly could not guess," he remarked, bitterly, "only that to some extent the same fate appears to have pursued you and me both, my sister. You were happily saved from a felon, and I from a felon's daughter. It is a small difference, but of course it must lead to the same result in both cases—that no one can doubt," he went on, as if striving to establish some doubtful proposition.

"Excuse me, brother. Well, yes, perhaps you are right," remarked his sister, though a deep flush burned in her cheeks as she spoke. "Certainly both ought to lead to the same result."

"Precisely. I am glad you are sensible enough to agree with me," he said, more easily. "And you will understand, nevertheless, that it is a great trial and I may say mortification also to have the thing ruptured after all that has passed."

"I understand that it ought not to be so, because it ought not to happen," she said, coolly. "I, at any rate, shall not have it to endure, because I have not given up and will not give up Lord Saville unless he absolutely refuses to marry me."

Bernard's brow darkened like a cloud.

"Maud, you must be mad! I never will give my consent to any such absurd degradation," he exclaimed. "I am your natural guardian and I will not suffer it."

"The contract was made and completed during my father's life, and will be carried out as soon as possible," she said, calmly. "And indeed it is to speak of Lord Saville and ask your assistance on his behalf that I am here, Bernard."

"I assist, and for him! Never!" exclaimed the young marquise, angrily.

"Then I shall have to do without, and act for myself," she observed, calmly.

"You are most exasperating, Maud, in your silly obstinacy," remarked Bernard, impatiently. "If you are prepared to give up any idea of marrying this rascally suitor of yours, it is a different thing. I might, for the sake of old acquaintance, do what I could to save him; but not without, remember, not without!"

"I have already told you I shall do nothing of the kind," returned Maud, with proud dignity. "And I am so certain that he is innocent of this foul mur-

der that I will rather risk name and fortune, and life itself, than calmly sit down to see him unjustly punished. Now you have my decision, Bernard."

"And if I refuse?" he asked.

"Then I shall rely on myself, and not even take you into my confidence as to what I want accomplished," she said, firmly.

"Where is he? Has he escaped?" asked the marquise, eagerly.

"He is not in the French prison," she said. "So much you may learn from the papers, as the nationality of himself and of the poor countess did not put the crime within their jurisdiction."

"You are extremely candid to tell me what, if I had taken proper interest in the matter, I could have ascertained," he replied, angrily. "But Gwenda Loraine was quite enough to occupy my thoughts and speculations hitherto; and it is a miserable aggravation to the trial for you to act thus, Maud. I scarcely thought you so unfeeling and so utterly obstinate and self-sufficient," he went on, bitterly, his wrath increasing with every moment till he believed himself the most injured creature in the whole land.

Lady Maud looked at him with a half-scornful air, as if his complaints and reproaches were too weak for her serious sympathy or vindication.

"I am answered," she said. "I comprehend you better than I desire to do, as my only brother, Bernard. Let it be. I will not trouble you more with my affairs. Our ideas are as different as our actions. We appeared to have almost identical fates, and our weddings were to have taken place at the same time and place," she went on, rapidly, as if an irresistible impulse brought out the outpourings of her heart. "Only there was this difference. You chose your bride from love; I accepted my future husband from a desire to save you and my father from a great sorrow, and to enable you to marry the object of your choice. Now you are about to discard her, from no fault of her own; while I cling to my plighted bond, and would be more true to Lord Saville in his trouble and disgrace than in his prosperous days. That is the difference between our ideas and wishes, Bernard."

For the moment Lord Brunton seemed to quail under the dignified self-reliance of his young sister. But then that natural weak selfishness of his nature, of which Gilbert had warned Gwenda long years before, resumed its power.

"It is all very well to put it in that way, Maud; but there are two views to be taken of every subject, and I can paint a very reverse picture to your pretty sketch. Can you absolutely deny, my self-sacrificing

sister," he went on, with a cold sneer, as he marked her proud mien, "can you deny that it is in accordance with your own inclinations that you are going to persist in clinging to your bond? Can you tell me that you do not love Sholto Saville, and would be disappointed in your dearest hopes should you fall in your quixotic efforts? Few women certainly would persist in such a scheme when the heart had been devoted to another," he went on, more resolutely, as he marked the varying colour and downcast eyes of his sister as she listened to his taunts.

She stood for some moments with her fair face full of contending emotion and deep and painful thought.

It was evident that he had at any rate touched a chord which could give pain and doubt, if it did not actually influence her action in the matter of which he spoke.

But the contest did not continue long, and when she at last did look up there was a firm determination in her whole expression and tone that at once silenced any farther doubts.

"Listen, Bernard," she said. "It is very evident that our ideas and characters are so different as if no kindred existed between us. If I blame your conduct to Gwenda, when you have not even now fully explained the circumstances of the case, you feel perhaps justified in lecturing me for an opposite course. Let me agree to persist in our separate walks, and, if possible, still preserve the kindly feeling that should unite an only brother and sister."

"But," he insisted, with a kind of sullen, half-sneering air, "you asked me to help you just now in saving this fellow from justice. That I certainly neither will nor can," he pursued, more determinedly.

"Not from justice, but from his enemies," she returned, softly. "No, Bernard, you utterly mistake me in my wishes and actions. If I believed Sholto guilty, I might still feel bound to soften his terrible fate, as I would do yours were you in the same misery. But now, when I am sure that he is innocent, when he is the victim of a base plot, I will never give him up, never, so long as he has need of my trust and my help."

Bernard could scarcely help admiring the noble selfishness of the girl, or contrasting it with his own false relinquishment of the girl he had actually sworn "to love and cherish for better, for worse." But it only irritated him yet more to be forced to this unpleasant remorse.

"Well, Maud, if this is your fixed determination it is not for me to contend with you in the matter. Your father, unfortunately, did not give me any power to control you as he should have done, and you must just take your own way. Only you had better not tell me what your plans and intentions are, lest I might be more annoyed and ashamed than I am now of my only sister."

It was a rash speech and Bernard perhaps repented it almost before it was uttered. But he was still smarting with the recent grief he had endured, and a suspicion, that he could not altogether repress, of the cowardice of his own conduct.

The next instant he perceived the mischief he had done.

The girl drew herself up in the stately way that was becoming more habitual to her since that one great event in her young life which had so coloured her whole ideas and conduct.

"It shall be so, Bernard. Do not fear. You shall not be dragged into the abyss you so much dread. My plans are nearly formed, and if they do not succeed, at least they can do no harm to others. All I ask is that you will not interfere nor blame what I may see it necessary to do, nor alarm our mother about it."

He bowed his head coldly as he replied.

"I think it very likely I shall go away for a time, so that all these risks and disagreeable scandals may blow over in my absence. Maud, there is but one thing I stipulate, and that is that you do not interfere with my affairs by any intercourse with Gwenda. So much must be in our compact, and I have a right to expect your obedience, if I preserve my neutrality in your case."

"Poor Gwenda!" sighed Maud. "She loved you well, Bernard, with a disinterested love, quite independent of your rank and fortune. It is hard, very hard for her to suffer innocently, but Heaven will help us both in our sorrows—ay, and refine our natures by the ordeal," she continued, loftily.

Bernard did not reply, but perhaps he might have even then yielded somewhat to the influence of the superior force of the girl's nature had not the bell rang and a peremptory summons come to the presence of the marchioness.

And, as so often happens in life, the golden opportunity was lost and the destiny of more than one life changed by that abrupt termination of the interview of such vital importance to the reputation and the honour of the Dorringtons and their connexions, and

their friends who watched their progress in this weary world.

CHAPTER XLIII.

But curse not him; perhaps now he,
Stung with remorse, is blessing thee.
Perhaps at death, for who can tell
Whether the judge of heaven and hell
By some proud foe has struck the blow
That laid the dear deceiver low?

RAYMOND LESTER stood as if stunned and paralyzed under the agonizing rebuke of his only—his idolized child.

Gwenda was, too, suffering herself. The sharp wound was still too raw and smarting for her to be just to or sympathizing with the torture that her parent endured at that moment.

All she could comprehend was that her every prospect in life was ruined, that her young love was crushed, that the noble suitor who had loved the lovely heiress—friend of his sister would—nay, had scorned the felon's daughter.

Could it be a wonder if she recoiled from the hideous prospect?

Could it be expected that the advent of a stranger father, with no claims on her love save of kindred, should recompense her for the destruction of such fairy dreams, such golden visions of happiness and splendour and homage and affection?

Gilbert Dorrington could see it all as he stood there glancing from one to the other with a sad, serious expression that told of his sympathy and comprehension of all that they were suffering in that momentous crisis.

Raymond Lester moved like one walking in a dream to the door of the apartment.

Slowly, with eyes downcast and hands clasped in a mute despair, he crept like a guilty thing who had no place nor right to be in the very house he had created for his child.

Then, when he turned to take a last fond look of the girl who was his sole love and care on earth, he raised his hands in a mute blessing on her stricken head.

Another moment's pause—then a desperate impulse seemed to actuate him.

He rushed back to the spot where she sat pale and quivering under her load of misery and knelt on the low ground before her.

"Gwenda, my child, daughter of a sainted mother, whose whole soul was bound up in my worthless self, at least say that you forgive me, say that all the atonement that I have striven to make has some value in your eyes. Child, look on me!" he went on, passionately. "Look on me as you see me kneeling at your feet. You can scarcely comprehend that I was once such as your gay suitor—your worthless lover. But I have toiled and suffered to gain wealth for you, Gwenda. And I—I will go away and never see you more when once you have spoken to me words of peace and pardon. Ay," he continued, as she still averted her eyes, "ay, it is a novel sight for a parent to be prostrate before his child, but it is meet and fitting as a punishment for my crime."

Gilbert Dorrington made a step in advance, as if to mediate between the two.

But either his mood changed or a sign from one of the agitated ones arrested his purpose, for he stopped as if riveted to the spot where he stood, his eyes fixed on the bowed figure of the fair girl in eager expectation of the next words she would speak.

Perhaps they would have been of free and unstrained forgiveness, perhaps she would have forgotten all in the gushing penitence of that humiliated father; but it was more human to feel the struggle between pain and duty and love than to exhibit more angelic unselfishness and filial affection.

"Yes, yes. I forgive you, but you must not ask too much—not too much. It was not well done—no," she continued, with a strange passion bursting out in her whole manner and tone. "Better have left me in my obscurity and nothingness than have raised me up only to hurl me into an abyss of misery and shame."

Gilbert spoke now.

"Gwenda, at least the intention might sanctify the deed," he said, half-reproachfully. "Look on that haggard face, those labour-worn hands, and say what they betoken. Do they not tell of nights and days of hard self-denial and toil for a child he had scarcely seen, and from whom he expected no gratitude, no thanks? For it was by an enemy's doing that this ever reached your ears; not his from whom you received the means which procured your blessings."

Gwenda's face was partially turned towards the speaker.

"Who," she asked, "who was to do this, who could force the secret from his lips?"

"It matters not. It is true—quite true," re-

plied the young man, firmly. "Heaven grant that you may never repent your harshness, Gwenda, in driving from you the parent whose whole soul is wrapt up in you and your life's peace."

It was a striking tableau.

That old man on his knees—older, it is true, in appearance than in years, but still with the gray hair and haggard features which appeal so powerfully for respect and pity, and the lovely young girl, pale and sorrow-stricken, but beautiful and graceful as ever in the attitude she unconsciously assumed. Yet the bending throat, the long lashes on the white cheek, the prostrate helplessness of the clasped hands, glittering in jewels and white as the snow, were all painfully touching in their grace and beauty, as well as the suffering they betrayed.

Her mood seemed to change, and the struggle ended at last.

The girl started as from a reverie, and cast herself on her father's neck with a flood of tears gushing from her fevered eyes.

"Yes, yes, I believe it all. Forgive me, forgive me. I have been hard and cold, I am—so still, I cannot control myself yet. It is so sudden, I cannot bear it as I ought; but I will try. Forgive me! I dreamy I shall conquer it soon. Please give me time."

He clasped her in his arms, that humble, worn, travel and toil-marked man.

His pale, thin lips were pressed to her young, fresh face for a brief moment of gushing and irrepressible tenderness.

"My darling—my Gwenda," he murmured. "Oh, if my life could avail to undo the past and bring the blessings that I would fain shower on your head, I would lay down my life cheerfully. And surely a parent's prayer will avail, my love. It will not be offered in vain. Bless you, my child, if sinful lips like mine may pronounce the words. I will try your fortune no more."

And releasing her from his embrace, he rose and calmly walked to the door of the apartment.

"Stay with her," he said to Gilbert. "She is in no state to be left, and I know not in whose hands she can be committed in her deep trial."

But, as if to answer his doubt, another and more distant door of the room was opened at the moment, and Mrs. Fenton appeared.

"It will be better for Miss Loraine to have a little repose," she said, calmly. "I believe from what has come to my ears that she has already had enough of agitation for her delicate frame to sustain. I will watch her till she may rally more completely than she can do while this strain on her strength continues."

And as she spoke she drew Gwenda's hand in hers, flung her other arm round her waist, and gently impelled her from the spot where she stood.

"Farewell, Gwenda. I will return home and do all that is possible in the meantime for the happiness you have still in store," said Gilbert, gently. "Even now it is not impossible that the sorrow you are suffering may be averted, after time has brought better thoughts. Mrs. Fenton, do not leave her," he added. "It is no time for her to be unsupported and alone, while suffering from this prostration of hope that she held dear."

And without another word Gilbert hurried after the retreating figure of his companion. He did not perceive that the door by which Mrs. Fenton had entered was still ajar. Still less did he observe a dark figure hovering near the opening thus left. But had he waited for a few more minutes he would have marked a telegraphic signal given by the lady, and then the disappearance of the intruder from his post, and an advance into the room recently quitted by the two gentlemen.

"Miss Loraine," said a rich foreign voice, "will you calm yourself to listen to a friend?"

Gwenda started from Mrs. Fenton's support and looked wildly round.

The speaker was a man of at least some fifty years, though younger looking and displaying the indisputable marks of good looks and blood in his whole appearance and bearing. He had the dark eyes and the peculiar skin of an Italian, though the once black hair was already streaked with grizzling gray, and his figure perhaps slightly bent from the active lilianness of youth or early middle age.

Gwenda shrank back with instinctive aversion to a stranger's presence as he approached her.

"Who is it? What does he want? I cannot see any one," she murmured, painfully, to her chaperone, as he drew nearer.

"Hush! he is a friend. He wishes to save you, perhaps to succeed in making your happiness," whispered the lady, softly. "Listen to him, my love; you can but dismiss him afterwards from your house and never see him more."

"Nay, that is promising almost too much, my dear madam," observed the stranger; "but, at any rate, it

will rest with Miss Lorraine how often I am admitted here. And, besides, I have important facts to communicate and proposals to make to her."

"No, no, not yet. I cannot bear any more. Another time," she muttered. "To-morrow. I have heard enough now."

"Hush, hush! it may perhaps heal the wound and remove some of the sorrow," said Mrs. Fenton, soothingly. "It is but for a short time, one little effort and all will be over."

Still Gwenda trembled in every limb, and her eyes turned hopelessly on her chaperone.

"Well, well, perhaps you are right; perhaps I had better hear all. I can but die," she murmured, sadly.

"Die—pooh, pooh! There is the strength and vigour in you that will bear a great deal more than the tidings I have to give," said the stranger. "In the first place, I must tell you my name, and then ask you to look at me more particularly before you decide as to my errand. Have you ever seen me before, do you think?"

Gwenda's eyes were dimmed with tears, but as the intruder came into the fuller light of the window where she had retreated, and spoke those words in a more natural tone than he had before used, a strange memory seemed to return to her, which brought back some of the most painful days of her young life.

Who could it be? That was the first bewildered idea in her brain. Then, by degrees, it seemed to dawn upon her. It was one with whom her early and troubled days of childhood were connected. The associations seemed to rise up before her now. The strange, beautiful, cold woman who had forbidden her to call her "mother," even though she had no other remembrance of a parent save this guardian of infancy. And then a man, a stern though not unkind man, who had in a peculiar degree loved and terrified her young spirit, when she was taken to his home for a brief space. It had not been for long; she had soon been transferred to other control and another home. But the features and the voice had impressed themselves so strongly and deeply on her child brain that they all returned to her now when that face and voice were once more before her. It was the same individual, though she was even now unaware of his name or position.

But that information was soon supplied by the gentleman himself, after a brief pause.

"Ah," he said, "I see you do remember me, young lady, but whether you are also as well acquainted with my name is a very different affair. I am the guardian of your infancy, the friend of your childhood, and the tender protector of your youth, even while unknown and unsuspected by you. I am Count Albert de Fontaine."

And he took the girl's hand in his, and raised it to his lips, ere she had time to resist the freedom.

The name was unfamiliar to her, though it would have brought some remarkable and fearful ideas to the mind of her friend, Lady Maud.

But Gwenda's brain was so confused with all the terrible shocks that it had received that if she had ever heard it before it was utterly without meaning to her at the instant.

"I know—I know," she replied; "but what then? I do remember something about you in my early childhood—at least, I think so; but I have never that I know heard your name."

He laughed slightly.

"So much the better," he said; "though it has been brought before the public pretty well lately, I fancy. However, I am better acquainted with yours, young lady. I can even tell you what is your correct style and birth. You are by birth and baptism Gwenda Lester, albeit you are known usually to the world as the heiress, Miss Lorraine. And, what is more, I hold your father's life and liberty, ay, and your own fortune also, in my keeping, or, to speak more correctly, they are in your own power. Gwenda Lester, the felon's daughter, may yet, if she pleases, have a title attached to her name."

CHAPTER XLIV.

And in the empire of thy heart,
Where I should solely be,
If others do pretend a part
Or dare to share with me,
Or idols more if thou erect,
Or go on such a score,
I'll smiling mock at thy neglect
And never love thee more.

LADY MAUD DORRINGTON had left her brother with a swelling heart, albeit she disguised it under a proud bearing and a calm face, that yet betrayed under its outward composure the anxious suffering of the heart within.

She repaired first to her own apartments, ere she sought her mother's presence, and there gazed at herself in the glass, as if to decide what might be the inference drawn from the fair face that it reflected.

There was perhaps the stern reliance of suppressed

agitation in the deep red spots on the cheek bones, but little besides to attract attention.

And Maud knew well that the marchioness was not extremely keen-sighted as to the signs and symptoms where her own comfort was not concerned.

Yet, ere she went to her mother's room, she hastily opened a door which led from her own dressing-room to a square passage, on the other side of which was another door, of which she drew the key from her bosom, and turned the lock.

Then she gave three little brief taps at the wainscot ere she pushed open the handle and entered the apartment to which it gave admittance.

It was an old-fashioned chamber, with oak panellings, and crimson curtains that hung in festooned draperies in alternation with the gorgeous carvings round the walls of the apartment.

And in a kind of alcove recess, raised like a dais in ancient days, was a majestic four-poster stately bed, that might have been a relic from the fifteenth century, in the old and palmy days of the Dorringtons. But the chief interest of the room so far as Maud was concerned did not consist in these rich and singular monuments of the past.

There was a living figure in this scene, a tenant of the antique room, which had for her a charm and a value beyond all price.

And this individual advanced quickly to meet her as she appeared within the space.

"Lady Maud, this is indeed good and brave of you," said the subdued voice of Sholto, Lord Saville. "I hardly could venture to expect you till nightfall, according to our compact."

Lady Maud must have had a wonderful control over her feelings and demeanour.

There was no fear or agitation in her manner or tone as she quietly stood in the obscure light of the stained windows that were letting in the coloured rays of the afternoon sun over the chamber and gave an almost unearthly radiance and beauty to the fair daughter of the domain.

"I claim no merit on that score, Lord Saville," she said, calmly. "I am here because circumstances require it. It is a very simple duty," she added, striving to steady her voice to the calm, commonplace of the words. "I have been talking to—my—brother," she said, after the choking of the throat was in a measure forced back. "Unfortunately circumstances have irritated and poisoned his mind against you."

Lord Saville gave an ill-suppressed and sarcastic smile.

"I understand," he said. "Lord Branton has not forgiven me for thwarting his wishes, and, of course, believes me guilty."

"No, no—alas! no!" exclaimed Maud, sadly. "All is ever between him and Gwenda Lorraine. I cannot explain, indeed, I do not know all; but I believe she is the daughter of a—felon!" she went on, in a hurried tone. "And Bernard cannot endure the disgrace—the idea of such a marriage."

In a moment Sholto's blood rose to his face as the words came on his ears.

It was but too resembling his own position not to raise his bitter and suspicious pride.

Then the sight of that fair, calm, lofty face, and its quiet air of truth and earnestness, lulled the alarm in his breast.

"I ought not to be surprised then at any of his wishes or proceedings," he returned. "A man who can so easily relinquish one he loved so freely and long can scarcely be expected to tolerate more distant connexions in the same condition. Miss Lorraine and I are in the same category, I suppose, only that her disgrace is reflected, and mine—"

"Unjust," interposed the low, soft tones of the girl, with a strange, soothing power in their accents. "Do you think I doubt your innocence, Lord Saville? Should I act as if I were it a matter of hesitation in my mind?"

"It might be pity," he said, bitterly. "I have heard that such a feeling is very common to the female breast, even to the guilty and the unloved," he went on. "I am not so vain as to ignore that fact."

"Perhaps," she said, quickly. "I am not answerable for others. I only know my own belief and motives. I am sorry—yes, ashamed—indignant that Bernard should shrink from this trial; but I can say nothing more than I have done, and act accordingly. Lord Saville, I dare not let you remain here longer, she continued, in a constrained, hurried tone. "It is no longer a safe refuge for you."

"You have betrayed me then? I might have expected it. The trial was too great for female endurance," he returned, coldly. "I am grateful to you, Lady Maud; but I will not trouble you farther. I am ready to go, and relieve you from my presence."

And he rose, as if to carry out his words, before she could arrest his movements.

Lady Maud's small hand was laid on his arm with a light but firm touch.

"Lord Saville you are wrong, unjust," she said, sadly. "I do not tell you that it is safe for you to stay; but I do say that you shall not go with my consent without I have made the necessary arrangements for your safety. It would break my heart if you perish," she went on, her eyes moistening with suppressed tears, as she saw the cold bitterness with which he turned away from her beseeching glance.

He could not doubt or scarcely resist those pleading looks, those sincere and touching tears.

"Strange," he said, "that there should be such a difference between the brother and sister. The one gives up her loves, and who loved him, at a word; and you, Lady Maud, who can have no thought of love between us, you are firm and persistent in the troth you pledged at the bidding of your parents."

There was a look of sharp pain over her face as she spoke as if a thrill ran through every nerve; but it passed, and again she regained her hard-won self-control.

"Exactly so," she said. "Of course it can but be the tie that bound us, Lord Saville, which makes this right and becoming in me; but so it is, and I will not flinch from the duty. Oh, in pity, do not let such trivial and idle scruples and memories come between you and what has life and death in the balance!" she went on, impetuously. "This is no time for such cold etiquette. You are innocent, and you shall be saved if there is power in woman's will and wit," she continued, with a wan smile.

He gave her a look of keen, questioning, smiling admiration.

"You are worthy of your race, Maud," he said, calmly.

It was the first time he had called her by her name without her title, and it made her young heart beat at the novel sound.

"Yes," he said, "worthy that you should have a different love, a more devoted lover than I have—than I could have been. Would to Heaven that I had met you sooner, Maud; it would have saved much sorrow, if not sin," he went on, as if the words were rather forced from him than the natural confession of his heart.

She looked at him inquiringly.

"Then it is true?" she asked, sadly. "You did—yet no, you could not be guilty of such a crime. I will not believe it of you."

"Guilty, Maud," he repeated, "of her murder? No! I would rather have swallowed the potion that killed her than let it come within the very reach of her lips. Poor Laura!" he burst out, with unmistakable agony. "Oh, that you should have encountered such a fate, and in my very presence!"

"Then you did love her," said Maud, in a low, suppressed tone, and a blanched paleness banishing the colour from her face.

Lord Saville hesitated for a moment, but the pain of that young sweet face was too irresistible not to bring some confession from his lips.

"No; scarcely am I so guilty as the words you use would imply," he faltered. "Maud, it is a difficult task to convey the real truth to your pure mind where the unfortunate Laura is in question. But if I was attracted, fascinated by the charms of one of the noblest creatures of her sex it was before I ever saw you, Maud, and when the vague compact between me and the child daughter of Lord Branton seldom even crossed my thoughts," he went on, eagerly; "and so soon as poor Laura knew of my bond she was eager to send me from her, and to forbid my seeing or thinking of her more."

"I did not desire you, Maud, when I came to settle our future. I told you it was not a matter of love, and I know that you, young and lovely and noble, could never dream of such a feeling where a nearly unknown and cold suitor was concerned. My last meeting with her was purely accidental on her part and my own. She was alone and suffering—her husband at last joined her, and when the very instant of her departure for England arrived he entreated me to take her under my charge, during the brief journey to Havre."

"Could I refuse? You know the rest, Maud. But I never knew till now the nobleness of your nature, your lofty unselfishness, your superiority to woman's weakness. I never knew that I really could have loved you, had it not been for—that unhappy pre-occupation of my mind."

It was a secret but bitter truth to hear for a young and high-born and spirited girl.

Lady Maud perhaps scarcely had time to ask her own heart what the feelings should be which answered so strange a confession. There was little time to spare now, for she had already lingered too long from her mother's presence.

"We can speak of this some other time," she answered, hurriedly. "It is enough that you pledge your word for your innocence. And now please listen to the plans I had already formed should Ber-

nard fail me in his co-operation. There is much risk, but still I do not fear, with courage and calmness in us both."

And she spoke to him for a few moments in a hurried tone and then abruptly left the room.

(To be continued.)

ADRIEN LEROY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Maurice Durant," "Fickle Fortune," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

LEAVING the interrupted procession on the terrace at Barnminster, we must return to the riverside village of Weybridge.

No sooner had Mr. Jasper Vermont taken his departure than poor little Lucy Ashford sank on the floor and burst into a flood of tears. So great had been the strain that she was completely unnerved, and had quite forgotten the likelihood of her husband's immediate return and Reah's mysterious disappearance.

The dim cloud of apprehension which her heart had given her presentiment of had burst upon her head. Mr. Jasper Vermont, the strange gentleman who held her secret, was alive—ay, and more than that, had not forgotten nor failed to threaten her.

Presently, recalled to a sense of her position, she jumped up and called to Reah. Then she remembered that the girl had disappeared, and, fearful of being left alone to encounter Mr. Jasper, whose return she expected momentarily, she ran to the door, calling on the girl's name in a paroxysm of nervous terror, which ended at last in an attack of hysterics, in the midst of which honest John returned to find her.

With an exclamation of alarm he raised her from the floor, carried her upstairs, and ran for the doctor.

When the doctor came Lucy had relapsed into low fever, and was talking deliriously of an inn at Canterbury and an individual by the name of Johann Wilfer.

Her husband paid little attention to her wandering, incoherent sentences in the first excitement of his anxiety; but presently, as they took distinct form, and she plainly confessed the one error of her life, poor John recoiled from the bed and looked round him with a bewildered, sorrow-stricken air.

All the little strangeness in his wife's conduct and manner were now explained. He had been deceived! She had loved another before him, and at the bitter truth John Ashford hid his face in the homely counterpane and sobbed like a child.

Honest tears bring relief and soften the heart. When Lucy Ashford awoke she found her husband's eyes, still wet with tears, looking at her with pitying tenderness.

"John," she said, faintly, "you know all?" and hid her face in her hands.

"Yes, dear, you've told me all. Why didn't you tell me before?"

She looked at him with open eyes in wonder. Was that all the reproach his righteous anger would deal out to her? Could it be possible that, knowing all, dear, good John loved her still, and would still call her his wife? Oh, yes! and for testimony thereof his arm was around her neck and his kiss of forgiveness upon her lips.

"John," she said, crying with ineffable thankfulness and peace, "and for poor father; it will be new life to him to know that this dreadful weight is off my heart, and that you, knowing what a bad woman I have been, still call me your little Lucy! Oh, John, John, fetch him—fetch him!"

John kissed her and without a word put on his hat. If his little Lucy had asked him to bring her a chip from the tombstone of Franklin at the North Pole kind-hearted John would have started off to procure it as unhesitatingly.

He borrowed a horse and a rickety dog-cart from a neighbour and started off in the starless night for Mr. Harker, leaving word with the doctor—who with his own hands was preparing a cooling draught in the little parlour—that when Reah returned she was to sit with and cheer up Lucy until he came back from London.

Now it happened that Mr. Harker was late at the office that night, bending, sad and wrinkled and wan, over his repugnant tasks. Sigh after sigh broke from his thin lips as he hearkened the gins and snares for the unsuspecting victims Mr. Jasper Vermont, his master, had set his heart on catching.

It was hard, very hard to be the tool of such a merciless fiend, to be the servant of such a master of deceit, villany and fraud; but so greatly did the father love his erring child that he would scarce have hesitated in committing murder had Jasper Vermont set that crime as a price of his forbearance and silence.

He would purchase his daughter's safety and happiness with his heart's blood if need be.

With this resolve he worked on, setting in order the various accounts which Mr. Jasper would require to be laid before him on the morrow, and entering in a book concise histories of the debts and difficulties which placed dozens of Mr. Jasper's acquaintances in his power.

A knock at the door startled and roused him from his task. Hastily shutting the intricate ledger and covering the deeds and documents with a large sheet of paper, the old man rose and opened the door.

It was John Ashford, and at the sight of his round, kindly face he staggered back, clasped the table with one hand, and gasped:

"Lucy!"

"All right—all right," said John, reassuringly, but with a quieter voice than his usual one; "don't be frightened, Mr. Harker. Sit down. It's rather sudden; but when she says 'Go and fetch father' you see I come and fetch you directly."

"Lucy is ill?" said Mr. Harker, trying to calm himself, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. John nodded and sighed and glanced at Mr. Harker's hat and coat.

The old man rose, put his hat on and nodded at the door.

"Don't tell me she's very ill, John," he said, in a trembling voice, "until we get outside. I'm an old man, John, and she's the only child I've got."

John helped him on with his coat, reassuring him the while.

The two, after having locked up the office, started for Weybridge.

Until they had left the London streets behind and the early morning had revealed the beauties of the road neither of them spoke a word; then John, avoiding all mention of Lucy's secret, told the old man of how he had found her lying on the floor.

Mr. Harker's troubled face darkened and his thin hands went up to his mouth in a thoughtful, pondering way. But though his face grew darker, and an angry, resolute light came into his dim eyes, he never said a word.

They were within a few miles of Weybridge when John pulled up the horse with an exclamation of astonishment.

In the act of turning down a lane a few yards before them was a young girl.

After a moment of motionless surprise he threw the reins on to Mr. Harker's knees, leapt from the cart, ran after the girl and caught her by the arm.

"Maria," he cried, "what are you doing here, my girl? You haven't left Lucy?" reproachfully.

The girl looked up at him with sorrowful, questioning eyes.

"Yes," she said, "I have. I am going to London. I can't stay with you, although you were so good. Oh, sir, let me go, let me go."

John dropped her arm and shook his head sadly.

"Well, my girl," he said, "I didn't think you were one of that sort, to leave my Lucy, as was so good to you when she was ill and hadn't a soul near her."

"Ill!" said Reah, with a bewildered look. "She was not ill. It was the lady with him," and she shuddered, "not your wife."

John looked at her as if he thought the girl had taken leave of her senses.

"I don't know what lady you mean, my girl," he said, "but I left Lucy ill, very ill, and waiting for you. You see I didn't think you'd run away and leave her at such a moment. But you're your own mistress, my poor child, and I won't stay you," and he turned and walked towards the dogcart.

Reah followed him without a word, and he, seeing that she did so, lifted her into the cart.

No sooner had he done so, however, than Mr. Harker sprang to his feet, and staring at her with startled eyes, asked John who she was.

"This," said John, forcing him into his seat and starting the horse, "is Maria, a friend of Lucy's. Do you know her?"

Mr. Harker shook his head but still kept his eyes upon her.

"Maria!" he repeated. "A friend of Lucy's! Has she no other name? Where does she come from?"

Neither made any reply—John because he could not, Reah because she seemed perfectly indifferent to both his presence and his agitation; and the old man, eyeing her at intervals, muttered in his dry voice:

"Wonderful likeness, wonderful! I could have sworn—yet it cannot be. A friend of Lucy's!"

They reached Weybridge, and Reah, leaping from the dogcart, ran with her light, half-savage way past the two men, and with noiseless feet entered Lucy's room, bending over the bed and taking Lucy's hand with a grateful, loving glance, as such as if to implore her not to think she had forsaken her.

"They have come?" said Lucy.

Reah nodded and John and Mr. Harker entered at the moment.

"John, dear," said Lucy, "leave us for a minute." John stooped and kissed her, patting her hand as softly as a woman might have done, and beckoning to Reah to follow him left the room.

Half an hour afterwards the parlour door opened and Mr. Harker entered.

"What's the matter?" said John, starting to his feet. "Is she worse?"

"No," said the old man; "thank Heaven, she is better! John Ashford, I have come to beg your forgiveness on my knees. It was I who overcame her scruples and bade her marry you. I did it for the best. I did it that she might be happy. She tells me you have forgiven her; but can you forgive me?"

John, with tears in his eyes, caught him by the arm and shook his hand.

"You did it for her," he said. "I have nothing to forgive. If my poor darling had only plucked up courage and told me all the hour we were man and wife she would have learned how dearly I loved her, and saved you both many unhappy years."

"Bless you, John!" said the old man, buttoning his coat, "you are a good man. Would to Heaven we had done rightly by you from the first!"

"Well, well," said John, "never let us say another word, never let us think about it again. And now may I go upstairs? But where are you going?" as the old man put on his hat.

"Back to London," said Mr. Harker, in his dry voice, smiling grimly. "I have work to do, an account to settle, John, for Lucy and myself. You don't know all yet, John; you don't know, you never will know, what poor Lucy and I have suffered. We've been slaves all these years, trembling and shrinking under a villain's nod and frown. I've sold myself to a demon, who, in consideration of my services, of my body and soul, John, promised to keep his talons from my poor Lucy. He knew of her misfortune, and he threatened to let the world and you, John, know of it too, if I didn't bind myself to him and do his villainous work. I have done it, John, for years. I have endured shame and agony unspeakable that my darling's secret might be safe. I have been his tool and his scapegoat. Men whom he has ruined through me have spat upon and cursed me. I, an old man, going to the grave, have earned the title of usurer and thief! All this I have done and suffered that he should never blight my child's happiness by his presence. He has broken the contract; he was here yesterday, John, and with his fiendish face and threats nearly killed her. Now his power is gone! Lucy is free and I am free. He has done that which he had sworn not to do. Now I take my turn, and for every tear he has wrung from my darling's eyes I will wring a groan from his black heart! Don't speak to me, John. Go up to Lucy. If she lives or if she dies I'll avenge her!"

Then before the astounded John could utter a word he left the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

At the singular and unprepossessing appearance which the strange man presented the officer who had the command of the arresting party moved closer to Adrien and looked round at the baron for an explanation.

But his stern, agitated face showed no signs of recognition, and the remainder of the group seemed stricken with such bewilderment of the faculties that Mr. Jasper Vermont ventured with a properly composed face to step forward.

"What do you want, my man?" he asked, glancing at the dissipated, low-bred face with grave eyes.

"I don't want you," retorted the man, roughly eyeing Mr. Vermont from the corner of his eyes. "I don't know you. I want Mr. Adrien Leroy!"

At this moment one of the officers moved slightly and disclosed the tall, princely figure.

The man sprang forward as if about to strike Adrien, but the duke struck him across the chest and bore him back.

"Who is this ruffian?" he exclaimed, in his broken English, his pale face crimsoning at this fresh indignity offered to his well-beloved friend.

Then he added, turning to the officer:

"Have you brought all the scum of the earth at your back, sir?"

The officer shook his head.

"I don't know this man," he answered, "or his business. Do you, Mr. Leroy?" he asked, touching his cap with unconscious respect to his prisoner.

"I do," said Adrien, in the low, restrained voice in which he had spoken since his arrest.

"I should think you did!" exclaimed the man, standing forward and staring round. "It ain't likely as you'll forget me, nor me you—"

"By Heaven!" exclaimed the duke, enraged beyond endurance by the man's insolence, "this is too much."

And he strode forward.

"Stop!" said Adrien, in a sad voice. "Let him

“Speak. Come, sir, speak to the point and quickly. What do you want of me?”

“What I asked a month ago!” answered the man, insolently, glancing round to see what effect his words had had, and letting his eyes rest for a moment upon Mr. Jasper Vermont, who stood quietly regarding him, his face full of sympathy for his friend and benefactor, whose troubles appeared never-ending.

The crowd pressed closer then at fever pitch. What new phase of the scandal was this fellow in seedy clothes and swollen face about to introduce?

“I want my niece, my girl, Leah!” said the man, “my girl as you took from her home and deceived. That’s what I want, Mr. Leroy, and the sooner I have it the better it’ll be for all parties.”

Adrien looked at him with darkened brow, then he turned to the duke, sorrowfully.

“This man,” he said, “has a fancied grievance against me; will you do me the last act of kindness that will be in your power, and hear what he has to say? Tell him I know nothing of his niece—”

“That’s false!” exclaimed Mr. Wilfer, savagely, interrupting him.

The duke raised his arm, but an officer caught it, and with a warning gesture forced Mr. Wilfer out of reach.

“So it is false!” retorted Mr. Wilfer, looking fiercely round, still with a cunning under-glance at Mr. Jasper’s troubled face as if seeking his approval. “He does know where she is, for he took her from her home, and she hasn’t been seen since she entered his chambers! If she’s alive, where is she? and if she isn’t, then this high and mighty swell, as is dressed like a king, is nothing better than a murderer!”

A thrill of horror ran through the throng. Mr. Jasper flung his hands before his face as if to shut out the sight of his friend’s face.

Constance, breaking from the baron’s detaining grasp, moved with quiet dignity to Adrien’s side again and laid her hand upon his arm, while a tall figure, dressed in scarlet robes that were half-concealed by a large blue domino, moved a step nearer to that part of the crowd and fixed her eyes upon Mr. Wilfer.

“Let him answer that!” continued Mr. Wilfer, loudly, and with the air of a painfully injured and indignant man. “Let him answer that, and if he goes to deny it let him look at this,” and he drew Adrien’s watch from a tattered pocket in his coat. “Perhaps he’ll say that this isn’t his watch! But there’s plenty here as can recognize it, if there wasn’t his coat of arms on the back. Where did I get this? No, I didn’t steal it,” he continued, fiercely, in answer to a muttered question by the officer. “He gave me this, flung it to me like he would to a dog, to hold my tongue. Ask him, some of you, if he remembers the night I met him in the park! A mighty fine gentleman, a regular honourable gentleman, who robs a poor man of his innocent niece, and when he’s asked to give an account of her flings me his watch to stop my tongue!”

Mr. Wilfer paused, not for lack of invective, but for want of breath.

The crowd surged to and fro, and half-spoken exclamations of astonishment, wonder and horror broke from a hundred lips.

Could it be possible that Adrien Leroy, the soul of honour, the man whom they had been adoring through three brilliant seasons, could be the dishonourable scoundrel which this dirty, drunken-looking man proclaimed him? Impossible! But the watch!

And the masked faces turned to one another with painful doubt and distress, which formed in an audible “Hush!” as Adrien, averting his eyes from Lady Constance’s face, turned to the baron, who had risen and was sternly regarding him.

“Do you believe this man’s vile man’s story, sir?” he asked, in clear tones.

“Believe it!” interrupted Mr. Wilfer, who was determined on playing his part. “He can’t be off it! Here’s the watch. A hundred people can prove as they saw my girl—”

“Silence!” said Mr. Jasper, coming forward, as if unable to endure the scene any longer. “Silence!” Mr. Wilfer, whom no one else had as yet succeeded in silencing, was wordless in a moment.

Mr. Jasper turned to Adrien, and commenced speaking in a low tone.

“Speak out,” said Adrien, regarding him with a steady look. “Speak out, if you are the friend I have taken you for! I have no secrets from any here. Friends or enemies, they may hear all.”

Jasper shook his head sorrowfully.

“If you will have it so, Adrien,” he said, “I was going to implore you to give this fellow his answer and let him go. Tell him you know nothing of this girl Leah, and relieve us from such an accusation. Let me tell him that you never saw her.”

Adrien smiled sadly.

“That would not be true,” he said. “I have seen her.”

Lady Constance raised her pale face and looked at him with a startled sort of incredulity.

“Ah, perhaps you’ll admit taking her to your chambers!” sneered Mr. Wilfer.

“I will,” said Adrien. “I found her starving with hunger and cold in the street, to which she had fled from the brutal violence of her uncle, whose blows had left their vile marks upon her arms. I took her to warmth and food, that is all the wrong I did her, as Heaven is my witness, and as she herself would be were she here. But, as you doubtless know, she left my chambers while I was walking the streets, which I did that not even a breath of suspicion should rest upon her. You have your answer!”

Mr. Wilfer, after glancing at Mr. Vermont with the same hidden cunning, burst into a discordant laugh.

“Very well, but if your friends ain’t the flats they’re supposed to be you won’t get them to believe that! Is it a likely story? If she’d left you, run away, as you say, where would she go but back to her own home, where she’d always been treated kindly? Wouldn’t she have turned up before this, even if it had been in the dead-house?”

Adrien made a gesture of weary impatience and turned to Constance.

But Constance, whose eyes were still fixed on his, dropped her hand from his arm and staggered back.

“Adrien!” she wailed, in so low a tone that only he could catch it, “I could have borne all but this!”

He seemed about to speak, but suddenly checking himself, motioned to the officer that he was ready to proceed.

But the officer, after regarding Mr. Wilfer thoughtfully for a moment, called one of his men aside and gave him some command.

The detective immediately crossed over to Johann Wilfer and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

“What’s this?” exclaimed Mr. Wilfer, starting and looking round indignantly. “What does this mean? What have I done?”

And he looked appealingly round and at last at Mr. Jasper.

“It means that you will have to come with us,” said the detective. “If your story’s got anything in it I reckon there will be another count in the indictment and Mr. Leroy will have another charge preferred against him besides forgery. So come along, my friend.”

But Mr. Wilfer struggled, and the crowd pouring through the doorway in its eagerness to catch every word and action of this life-drama surrounded the centre group, murmuring excitedly.

Another officer left Adrien’s escort and came to help his companion. Wilfer in an instant felt the handcuffs slipping over his dirty wrists, and shouted for help.

“What have I done?” he shouted. “Is a man to be took into custody and ill-treated because he comes after his niece? I’ve done nothing agin the law, if that swell has. Put me down, or I’ll make it hot for you.”

“Lift him up,” said one constable to the other.

They raised the slouching figure from the floor and dragged it along between them.

“Stop a moment!” said Mr. Jasper, with whose arrangements the last move threatened to clash. “Do not hurt the poor fellow. He is out of his mind, I think—or—something is wrong. Put him on his feet until you get a warrant from his lordship.”

The baron, who was supporting Constance upon his arm, turned away with a look of scornful repudiation, which Mr. Jasper received with unmoved countenance.

“Well,” he said, “take him away, and keep him safely, that he may be punished if his story is not true.”

“If!” cried the duke, who was turning to leave the terrace in Adrien’s wake, “if, Mr. Vermont! Take heed! There are not wanting those who will avenge your benefactor for every light word, though it come from so contemptible a creature as yourself.”

Jasper turned up his eyes.

“Ah, my duke,” he said, “it is well in you who have ruined my poor friend! It is easy to storm over the ashes which alone remain of the fire your own hands lit!”

“Miscreant!” cried the baron, thrusting Constance from him and striding to Jasper.

“Stand back, my lord,” said the duke, “and leave him to me. There is some fiendish plot at the bottom of all this. I have my suspicions; should they prove true, I will deal this fellow punishment with a liberal hand. Go, sir! The man who has stood by your unworthy side when none other could longer do so is where you cannot follow him or trouble. Take your presence from this house, which it defiles!”

Mr. Jasper smiled sadly, and turned round upon the crowd.

“You wrong me, duke, and through me him whom you pretend to love. I have stood his true friend and

kept this ruin at bay for months and months, when none other could have done so. But this is the gratitude which one must expect for the discharge of friendship’s office. Poor Adrien is taken from the world, you think, and it is of course high time to remove from its false surface his humble friend, Jasper Vermont.”

“Friend!” said the duke. “Deadliest and most poisonous of foes I believe you to be. Begone, while you are yet safe!”

“Begone, sir!” echoed the baron. “If I find you on my grounds in an hour hence I will thresh you within an inch of your life.”

Jasper Vermont’s face grew livid, and, with a clenching of the hand that struck his carefully cut nails far into his soft palms, he strode forward and confronted the baron and the motley throng at his back.

“Your grounds, Baron Leroy! First tell me where I shall find them! Your grounds! Ha, ha!” and he laughed a quiet, sinister laugh. “You have no grounds, not a single inch in which to hide your head. Barmister Castle is in the hands of a money-lender; these lands as far as the eye can stretch are the property of Mr. Harker, the Jewish capitalist. The very shoes in which you stand are his property by right of countless bills and deeds which your son, Adrien Leroy, has made over to him!”

Speechless amazement rendered every soul silent.

“Madman!” gasped the baron, clasping Constance, who had fainted, to his heart.

“No, no!” laughed Mr. Vermont. “It is not I who am the madman, but you, hoary-headed idiot, who trusted your wealth to your boy-idiot before it was his by right! You should have waited until death had removed you from the earth which you and yours have encumbered so long ere you gave your beloved Adrien full power over the kindly Barmister, for he, with kingly lavishness, has melted every stone of it in the cup of pleasure and poured out the costly draught at the feet of his parasites and flatterers. Look round you, my lord baron, and behold his friends! Friends? leeches, rather, who have sucked him dry of every precious golden drop. Look at them, dressed like fools at a fair, look at them, and while you curse them, one and all, as the causes of your ruin, call them false friends—and not me, who to the last will stand by Adrien Leroy, spendthrift, forger and villain!”

As the vile words left his lips, the baron sprang at him.

But Mr. Jasper, not unprepared for such a result of his savage invectives, darted behind a statue, and pointed to the step, up which half a dozen men with every appearance of sheriff’s officers were hastily mounting.

“Here are the officer’s men in possession, my lord, to inform you of that which I would have broken to you more quietly but for the hard words you were pleased to bestow on me.”

“Villain!” said the duke. “I knew this was some vile plot. You have had the management of the estate, it is you who have brought all this about.”

Jasper smiled sardonically.

“Say rather, your grace, that it is I who have continually given warning of its confiscation. Ask Adrien Leroy himself, if you still doubt me, whether I have not constantly implored him to relinquish, to give up at least some of his many ruinous pleasures, to deny himself at least one extravagance.”

“Lord Leroy, Baron of Barmister,” said one of the men, coming forward with his hat in his hand, and taking no notice whatever of the masquers who thronging round presented a startling scene.

“I am he,” said the baron, hoarsely.

“A writ, my lord,” said the man, “at the suit of John Harker, of Basinghall Street, City. I beg your lordship to understand that I am in possession of the castle, and to issue orders that none of your friends leave the place without being searched, to prevent the removal of valuables.”

A cry of indignant astonishment broke from the crowd, which instantly surged forward, carrying to the front the tall figure of the Cleopatra, whose domino had been torn from her and who stood revealed in all her magnificence.

“Keep back,” shouted the man. “No use, ladies and gentlemen, our men are at all the entrances. Quite impossible to pass. Keep back, please.”

The crowd surged back, the men took up their position right across the head of the staircase, and proceeded to form a guard of exit, leaving a narrow passage through which the guests were requested in all their costly finery to pass in twos and threes.

The baron, stupefied beneath this last indignity, looked round him with senseless eyes, his grasp of Constance relaxed, and he sank on to one of the stone seats.

He was surrounded by such men as the marquises, Pomfrey, and Paxhorn immediately, while others ran after the duke, who had hurried after Adrien.

Constance looked round with that fearful sense of impotence which overcomes one placed in such a position. Then her eye caught Jasper Vermont's, where it looked down pitilessly from the balustrade. With a light, quick step she sprang to his side and grasped his arms.

"Jasper Vermont," she breathed, painfully, "this is your work, I feel assured of it. You have some motive, some object. Tell me, here, before another passes, what that object is, and if it be possible to satisfy it it shall be satisfied. We are in your power, I believe, though you would have us think otherwise. Speak quickly, and tell me the price you exact for a release from it."

He looked at her beauty, heightened to a pitch which it had never attained to ere that moment, and his eyes flashed.

"Come aside," he said.

Constance hesitated for a moment, looked back at the motionless figure of the baron, and then followed Jasper Vermont into the shade.

"You ask the price I require for releasing my friend from these ugly predicaments. How do you know that I can relieve him? No, do not answer. I may be able to do so, or I may not. If I were able I would require as recompense for such service no less a gift than that of Lady Constance's hand."

Constance clasped the stone balustrade and looked up in his smooth and now sternly-set face. She was no ordinary woman, and required only a moment to grasp the whole string of facts and possibilities. To-night she had discovered that she was capable of acts of which she had until then thought herself utterly incapable. She could love, and she could make a vast, noble sacrifice. For a moment she turned her face to the direction in which her love had been led, then she put her hand upon Jasper's arm.

"You will save them both?" she said.

"I will," he replied. "You agree to provide the reward?"

"I do," she said, then without another word she turned from him and walked back to the baron.

Jasper Vermont stood for a moment as if powerless to grasp the sense of his great, marvellous bliss, then with a step that was for the first time tremulous and unsteady he came forward. As he did so the curtains at the back were pushed aside, the numerous guests, who were being forced in twos and threes through the line of sheriff's officers, parted suddenly, and a thin, bent old man, dressed in a well-worn black suit, and leading a young girl, whose face, notwithstanding the olive hue, showed unmistakably traces of that fell disease—consumption, stepped feebly on to the terrace.

For a moment their presence seemed unnoticed, but the next an exclamation broke from Jasper Vermont's lips, and one of the officers looking up caught sight of the old man, touched his hat and said:

"Is that you, Mr. Harker?"

No sooner had the name passed the man's lips than every eye was turned upon the new comer, and the baron, rising, stood and confronted the person at whose suit he had been arrested.

The old man looked round with his small, sharp eyes until they rested on Jasper Vermont, then he raised his arm and pointed at him.

"Mr. Jasper Vermont, I have come to resign my situation, and gain my freedom."

(To be continued.)

It is intended to demolish the church of St. Edmund-the-King in Lombard Street. This is to be effected under the provisions of the Union of Benefices Act, which has brought about the destruction of so many of the London churches. The sacred edifice about to be pulled down was originally founded in the time of the Saxon Heptarchy, and was then called St. Edmundgrass Church, from its vicinity to the Grass Market. The old building was consumed by the great fire in 1666; and the present erection was built on its site by Sir Christopher Wren.

DAILY LIFE OF PIUS IX.—The Sovereign Pontiff, when not ill, rises daily at half-past five. Thiers gets up with the lark, and Guizot with the sun. After private prayer in his room he passes to his private chapel, indulges in prayer for half an hour, then administers the Sacrament, if able, and if weak partakes of it from the hands of his chaplain. Having given orders respecting the most urgent affairs, about nine o'clock he takes a little black coffee or soup. At two o'clock he dines, previously enjoying a slight walk and devoting a few moments to prayer; his dinner is simple, a friture of fish, or a chicken, some vegetable and fruit. Wine and water is his principal drink, and his abstemiousness is proverbial. Latterly he had been ordered a liqueur glass of pure claret after each frugal repast. After dinner he indulges in a siesta of fifteen minutes' duration, then reads his breviary, and after prayer again promenade; some hours' work and audiences occupy his

time till nine, when he sups on a soup, two potatoes, and a little fruit; at ten precisely he retires to his chamber, previously making a short visit to his chapel.

THE BLENKARNE INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlingcourt's Will," "The Ebony Casket," "The Secret of Schwarzenburg," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

To go back to Amri, who woke with a headache and a somewhat confused brain that morning after Amariah's unsuspected visit to his chamber, but without having any suspicions excited of unfair treatment.

His new life had already taught him that such was the penalty of an evening spent with too close acquaintance with the wine flask, and, seeing the empty bottle upon the table without any very definite recollections concerning the matter, he naturally enough concluded that he had taken a larger quantity than usual, and was paying for it by a dull morning.

His servant had returned, and, looking after him in his usual attentive fashion, soon had him ready for a stroll into the air, whose freshening breath fanned into healthier colour the sallow pallor of his cheek.

His thoughts were still hanging about Daisy, whose reappearance revived his old admiration. He was possessed with a curious longing to exhibit himself before her in his new aspect as a gentleman of means, and, acting upon the half-maudlin impulse, he took his way to the cottage from which he had seen her emerge—only, however, to be disappointed, and therefore the more eager in his design. Twice again that day he passed the place and had no glimpses of its occupants.

A week afterward fortune was more favourable. Daisy was out in the early morning freshness, twining her vines and carolling as sweetly and as gaily as the birds; for her uncle's mysterious trouble had not yet left its shadow upon her innocent heart, and Algeron, slowly gathering up his threads of proof, had a brave hope, which she shared.

Amri boldly approached, asking if he did not recognize a face that had beautified Indian scenes, as it now adorned this colder English home.

Daisy's red lip curled.

"For myself, I only remember a fellow-voyager upon a shipwrecked steamer," she said, with a meaning glance.

He had the grace to look ashamed.

"Ah, let me explain," he said, eagerly. "I went in the hope of rescuing all. I believed the ship would turn back, but all my persuasions were of no avail. But they assured me help should soon be sent to you. And it seems it was true. I cannot tell you how rejoiced I am at your safety."

"And at the safety of all who were on the island?" questioned Daisy.

Amri bit his lip.

"I forgot the others. Who could remember any others when thinking of you, fair English Lily? And were they all safely landed in England?"

"The destination of all did not lie hitherward," returned Daisy, evasively, remembering that she must not betray Algeron's vicinity. "My own friends came with me."

"Your own—that means your father and uncle?" he questioned again, equally apprehensive that he had been imprudent.

"It means them, certainly. It is not likely I shall ever see many of the others again."

"I have thought of you so often," pursued Amri, drawing a sentimental sigh. "I had determined to find you, though I searched this wonderful country over, and, lo, my benignant star conducted my steps to your very door. Sweet maiden, I am rich now. I can lavish upon you every luxury you may long for. I will make a fairy home for you. I will deck you with silken garments, and hang costly jewels around that graceful throat and those white arms. I will gratify every wish of your; only in return I ask that you will smile upon me—make me happy with your love."

An indignant flash came into Daisy's eye, but she veiled it by the drooping lid, controlling her maidenly resentment by the remembrance of Algeron's need of keeping close watch upon this bold usurper of his name and rights.

Amri mistook the silence for the coy shyness of a half-won sweetheart.

"You say nothing," he said, coming a step nearer. "Am I to have no word of encouragement, sweet English Lily?"

"I am not a Lily, only a simple Daisy," answered she, coldly; "and your promises are very grand, but then they are only words, and any one can be grand in words."

"You shall not have a chance to reproach me in that way again. I will bring you a proof the next time I come. What shall it be, a brooch or ring? You have only to command and I shall obey."

This was too much even for her prudence to withstand.

"Do not think I shall accept any present whether valuable or trivial from the hands of an unknown person," returned she, with spirit. "I would not hold myself so cheaply."

"But you are willing to accept new friends, are you not?" he questioned, ruefully.

"Certainly, if they show themselves worthy, and my grandfather and uncle approve," she answered, calmly.

"I shall soon be able to prove my position," he muttered as much to himself as to her.

"Good day, sir," said Daisy, dropping him a demure courtesy, and walking off into the house.

And Amri returned rather discomfited, to find his man fidgeting before the door with a face plainly betraying suppressed curiosity and excitement.

"There's a lady within, sir—a lady as is very particular to have you sent in to her the minute I can find you. She thinks I'm off looking for you, but I hope I know my duty better. I've stayed right here by the door so she couldn't get away with anything. She's in there now."

Amri opened the door carelessly, although he was not without a little pleasant curiosity concerning a lady visitor. He saw a closely-veiled and loosely-wrapped black figure pacing the floor impatiently. Something in the quick, lithe grace of movement struck him with a familiar thrill, and he took a hasty step forward.

The lady turned around, looked at him an instant, and then rushed forward covering his face with passionate kisses and hot tears in the excess of extravagant delight.

"My handsome son! my treasure! my idol!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "Do I see you again? Have we met at last to be happy and honoured and prosperous?"

"My mother!" exclaimed Amri, in utter surprise. She had thrown back the heavy crape veil, and showed her face lit up with smiles, the great soft black eyes glittering resplendently, a scarlet glow on the rich dark cheeks, the vivid red lips quivering beneath the very excess of joy.

Amri was not remarkable for his filial devotion, but he could not help being touched by this exhibition of her idolatrous affection for him. Nor was he quite unmoved by the still-evident traces of her former beauty.

"My sweet mother! So you have come at last!" he said, affectionately. "Welcome, thrice welcome to England."

She caught him into her arms, and kissed his forehead, repeating little exclamations of endearment and Hindoo phrases of childish delight, until her transport had a little exhausted itself, when she suddenly changed her manner, and said, more in her old tone of authority:

"And now let us talk of our prospects, which certainly seem grand enough even for my ambition. You have the bait safe?"

"Yes," murmured Amri, putting his hand down confidently to his waist. "I have become so used to it I think I shall miss it sorely when it is removed."

"And you have not meddled with its contents?"

How thankful he felt that he had mastered his curiosity as he met her piercing, searching eyes!

"No, I have not disturbed it, though I have been tempted more than once," he answered, promptly.

Amie drew a long breath of relief and seized both his hands while she exclaimed:

"Then there is nothing to hinder our triumphant march to riches and greatness. I have heard nothing from you since your second letter. Have you won the lady's consent? Are you to be married soon?"

"I think there will be no trouble," answered Amri. "But—but—there is some one I like so much better. So sweet a creature, dear mother! tell me if I may not forego this other bride, who is no heiress, except as the marriage makes her one. If we were sure of wealth by means of this wonderful belt why may I not please myself the best I can?"

"What have you heard of the young man?" she asked, abruptly. "You must not forget there are dangers to be guarded against. What of the proud young captain?"

"I know no more than I have written you. I took his belt and his letters, and left him on the island. But he escaped with the others, I presume. Since he has not appeared to annoy me I have not troubled myself about him."

Amie knit her brows. "He is in England, you may be sure. He wrote to the general that he should make his way hither promptly. It was a mistake of yours that you did not let the waves keep him safe for ever."

Amri gave a little shiver.

"One does not care for haunting ghosts. You said we might safely defy him if we had possession of the papers and the belt," he said, petulantly.

"So we may," returned his mother, thoughtfully. "Nevertheless we must move swiftly and cautiously, for the fox is on my track. In my joy at seeing you I had well nigh forgotten that. Look your door, Amri. No one must see me here."

And she glanced apprehensively towards the door until he had obeyed her instructions.

"I do not understand you," he said, as he came back to her side. "Who is on your track?"

"Sahib Adam!" whispered back Aimée, as if scarcely daring to trust the empty walls with the name.

"Sahib Adam!" repeated Amri, contemptuously; "and who is he that you should be afraid of him? Besides, I hoped you had forgotten to use that slavish address. What would any of these English people think to hear it? Your secret would be betrayed at once. I have done better, my mother. I do believe I have quite forgotten that I was ever the poor half-caste Amri. Nothing in my look, or speech, or thought, tells of it."

"You have improved wonderfully," returned Aimée, admiringly. "Is not the young lady very much in love?"

Amri shrugged his shoulders.

"She is as cold as these Northern skies. But she will obey her mother's wishes. I wish that one might do better her."

"No, that is not prudent. This Adam is more than you think. I have a long and startling story to tell you, but first let us settle what you will do with me. I must be kept from Adam's sight, and you too must act promptly. Oh! after all my trouble—my stealthy journey hither, we must not be circumvented! He is wily and powerful, and we may be certain he will follow to this spot. The girl must marry you at once, or we must both hasten away with the belt, and hide our track. If only he had been in prison I could defy all the rest. But I am afraid of him. Yes, Amri, I am terribly afraid of this Adam, and I assure you no time is to be lost."

"The power is in our hands. They are all anxious to insure the fortune that is to come, all but the girl herself, but she will yield to their wishes. Still I cannot see why we need to share it, mother. Why not keep it all ourselves?"

"Because of their right to it. Should anything happen don't you see that you will have the control of it because you are her husband? Nothing can undo that claim. And I dare not proceed without it. No, Amri, I dare not, for there is the young captain and—that terrible Adam, who has so strangely escaped his prison. They may come forward at any moment."

"Then we must submit to it," muttered Amri, ruefully. "Well," he added, under his breath, "it need not make much difference."

His mother looked at him sharply.

"You said the belt was safe. Give it to me now, and I will take care of it. I want to assure myself that there is no failure possible."

He laughed lightly.

"Do you doubt my word? But you will be obliged to trust it. How else can you be sure this is the same belt I took from the young captain?"

"I have a description of it and its contents," returned she. "The book gave me that, even if it left the story incomplete."

"What is it in? It cannot be gold, for it is not heavy enough?" questioned Amri, with glittering eyes.

"Papers—papers that are worth gold, plenty of it, and—a few jewels," answered Aimée, cautiously. "Only be safely and truly married to this girl, and I shall feel safe to defy anything while I hold that belt in my hand."

"You can arrange it as you will. I believe they would consent to have the marriage to-morrow if the banns, as they call it, were published."

"We will have it without the loss of a single hour more than is absolutely necessary," said Aimée, feverishly. "Tell me about them all, and I shall know how to manage."

And a long talk ensued, and it was more than an hour before Amri opened the door to his valet, and then it was to send him for a close carriage, into which he handed the lady, and followed himself, both glancing around the street sharply.

So it was that the family at Manor House were suddenly electrified, only three days after the distinct understanding of Ethel's consent to the engagement, by the appearance of the bridegroom elect with a strange lady upon his arm, who flashed upon them a brilliant smile, and said, abruptly:

"I am the bridegroom's mother, and I have been sent to hurry on the wedding. Do you know what has happened in India?"

There was an assumed dignity in her manner aside from its natural gracefulness that with her imperious beauty could not fail to impress them.

Madame Roscoe greeted her with the same cordial partiality that she bestowed upon the son, and upon every circumstance connected with her new hopes.

"Madame Vansittant! You are indeed welcome. How did you leave the general?" she exclaimed, as she hurried forward to clasp the stranger's hand.

"You have not seen the India papers?" said Aimée, gravely. "Alas, madame, I have sorrowful tidings. And it is only to further the general's dearest wishes to secure the safety of our hopes that I have hurried hither to act in his place while yet it is possible. Only the most prompt and cautious movement will now secure to us the wonderful treasure which fate threatens to snatch away from us."

Madame Roscoe turned pale and stared at her in amazement, and ejaculated feebly:

"To snatch away! Oh, Captain Vansittant, what does she mean?"

"It is too true," replied Aimée, putting on a doleful expression. "Alas, madame, some enemy has discovered our secret. General Vansittant has been murdered, and a vile plot laid to secure his fortune."

"Send for your Uncle Guy and Aubrey, Ethel!" cried her mother, in the deepest concern.

Ethel, scarcely daring to show the sudden relief that came to her aching heart, went out to find Jones and dispatch him with the errand. When she returned she found her mother sitting on the sofa beside the new-comer, their hands clasped, her eyes bright with feverish eagerness, two scarlet spots in her cheeks.

"Oh, Ethel," she cried eagerly, "there is still hope! We must not lose this precious chance. You shall be married at once. We will not lose a single moment that can be helped."

"And this is the dear girl," said the stranger, in that rich, mellifluous voice. "Let me give her a mother's kiss."

And bending towards her suddenly she left the light touch of those red lips upon Ethel's forehead.

The latter could not help the cold shudder that ran through her frame. She turned pale, and shrank back trembling.

Aimée was keen-witted, and read what was in poor Ethel's heart. A steely glitter came into her eyes, and from that instant she shared Amri's aversion, but she only smiled more brightly, and said, affectionately:

"We shall learn to know and appreciate each other by and bye. Just now we have only time to attend to this danger that presses upon us."

And then she turned again to Madame Roscoe and added, gravely:

"As I told you, I have only authority as General Vansittant's representative to put my hand upon the treasure when this marriage has taken place, and if it is not promptly accomplished the priceless fortune will be taken away."

"Oh, it shall take place instantly, just as quickly as the legal measures allow," exclaimed that lady.

"It is frightful to think of anything preventing it. My brother and my son will be here shortly, and they will arrange all things as promptly as possible."

When Colonel Blenkarne arrived and heard the story he looked a little puzzled, but the news of General Vansittant's death affected him deeply.

"Poor Ralph! poor Ralph!" he murmured. "I had hoped to clasp his hand once more in reconciliation and friendship. It is frightful indeed to think of his tragic fate."

"But the danger of losing all our fond expectations," interrupted his sister, whose fears had been so artfully worked upon by Aimée that she could think of nothing else.

"I don't see how any one can deprive us of our rights," he replied, slowly. "I cannot see why there is so much alarm if indeed the treasure is in Captain Vansittant's reach."

"The general knew the circumstances best, and he declared no time must be lost. How much more imperative then now that he is gone, and some secret foe is hunting everywhere for those jewels," pronounced Aimée, just withdrawing the handkerchief she had held to her eyes.

"To be sure it does not matter so long as the thing is decided on. It may as well be hurried on as not if it is really to happen," went on the colonel.

"Of course it is to happen," spoke up his sister, sharply. "I shall be as sorry as any one else to miss a proper ceremonial of the marriage, but there can be a grand reception afterward as soon as the whole affair is decided. Thank fortune, Ethel, I never listened to your repeated proposals that I should sell that lace dress of mine. Margery can get it up beautifully, and it will answer nicely. I'll run and set her about it this minute."

Ethel had left the little circle of eager talkers and was standing at the window looking out. Amri took a step towards her, and then changed his mind and returned to his mother's side. Aubrey went over to her, put his arm around her, and said:

"And what do you say, dear Ethel?"

"There is nothing for me to say. Is there?"

asked she, wistfully. "Oh, Aubrey, only make sure that these promises will have sure fulfilment, and make you and my mother happy, and not more miserable by the mockery of defeated hopes."

"But you yourself, Ethel. My darling, you look so sad it goes to my heart. You know we will not accept our happiness at the expense of your peace of mind. If there was the shadow of an affection for any one else I would not allow this marriage," he continued, in a low voice; "but as it is—"

"As it is, there is no alternative," answered Ethel. "So what use in discussing the matter? Make your arrangements, Aubrey, and when the time comes I shall not fail or falter."

She shook herself free from his encircling arm as she said it, with a kind of pettish impatience, and went out of the room, and seizing her hat, hurried forth into the fresh air, walking swiftly, and yet blindly, without any definite object or destination, out into the lane, and she was scarcely aware when she emerged into the highway.

She was walking along swiftly, with hanging head and clasped hands, and, quite unconsciously, a tragic fierceness of expression on the little pale face, when Frank Osborne nearly stumbled over her, he also walking slowly, reading a letter.

He looked as much delighted as surprised.

"Miss Ethel, this is an unexpected pleasure," he exclaimed, eagerly; "but after the first glance at her face he paused abruptly, and then added, timidly: 'May I walk with you a little way, or do you prefer to be alone? I see that something disturbs you. Treat me frankly, I beg of you, and don't let me annoy you.'"

"Captain Vansittant's mother has arrived, and I am to be married in a few days at the longest," she said, abruptly. "It is not unnatural for me to be excited by such sudden developments, is it? I am trying to walk myself calm."

Frank bit his lip. What could he say? What dared he say? He stole another glance at the pale, grave face, and then burst forth, impetuously:

"It is cruel in your friends to allow this sacrifice. Let me go to them and remonstrate!"

She shook her head resolutely.

"There is no alternative. You know what the fortune-teller threatened. It is that which frightens me most. When the sacrifice is made what if it is of no use? I think in that case I should go mad."

"Would, oh, would that I were back in my former position!" cried Frank. "If only I had my uncle's fortune you should see I would find a way to prevent this. And yet not his fortune either—how can I be so ungrateful?" he added, penitently, looking down at the letter in his hand, with its generous cheque upon Francis Osborne, merchant. "Dear old fellow, he can't quite enjoy his own happiness for thinking of my disappointment. No, I must never wish for his fortune, however frantic my aspirations may be for one of my own making. Ah, Miss Ethel, I have faith to believe that it will come in time."

"I would not wish for it," she said, drearily. "The very sound of the word is hateful to me. Oh, if only it might be my blissful portion to be left to poverty and happiness."

"Miss Ethel," said Frank, gravely, "you must let me speak to your brother or to Colonel Blenkarne. I cannot see you sacrificed in this way. I am not speaking for myself, my own defeated hopes, but only thinking of you."

"No, no," she answered, impetuously. "You must not say a single word. I shall not allow it. There is no other way, and I accept the situation. Don't make it any harder for me, I beg of you."

Frank looked at her sorrowfully, with a smothered passion quivering in his voice, as he said:

"Then you deny me all hope? It is farewell I must say to you?"

"Yes," answered poor Ethel, hurriedly, turning her face away to hide the burning blush that rose to her cheek, "it is farewell, Mr. Osborne."

He held out his hand.

"Well, I will try to imitate your heroism, hard as it will be. You will still have a devoted friend, Ethel. Do not fear to call upon me if you ever need me. Heaven bless you and give you peace."

She let her cold hand lie a moment in the tender clasp, but did not trust her voice in answer. Then she pulled down the veil over her face, and, turning, walked away slowly towards the lane again.

Frank Osborne stood still and watched her out of sight.

"Such a noble, tender heart," he muttered. "I shall never meet such another woman so near my ideal. Well, it is another trial of my strength. I think the cross ought to be well burned out of me by-and-bye." Then looking down at the letter he held, he added: "Poor uncle! I'm glad he doesn't know. I think it would spoil his voyage, which, I pray, may be happy and prosperous."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

POOR Daisy started back in an involuntary panic when she opened the door and found Madam



[AMRI DISCOMFITED.]

Blanc's odd figure and uncanny face confronting her. She stood her ground, however, when the intruder attempted to push unceremoniously past her and enter the house.

"Be kind enough to state your wishes, madame," said she firmly, for all her voice trembled.

"I have business with the lady who entered but just now. I will state it in her hearing," returned the fierce old woman, those weird eyes of hers glittering with an evil light. "Stand back, silly child, and let me pass."

At the sound of her shrill and angry voice Algeron came out to the rescue. The fierce black eyes blinked a little as they went over his person, and she muttered something unintelligible to them, but still attempted to push forward. Leaving Algeron to deal with the woman, Daisy slipped back to her room, and hurriedly informed the lady of the intruder's persistence.

"I may as well go to her. There will only be a useless disturbance if I refuse," said Lady Blenkarne, with an air of calm resignation. "My dear, I have taken a strange fancy to you. I love you already, and I shall come hither again. I am going to trust you with an important commission—one which must be promptly executed. Take this belt, carry it to Colonel Guy Blenkarne. You can easily find his address, for it is well known in the town yonder. Give the belt to no hands but his, and tell him that Lady Blenkarne, in a mysterious fashion, has come into possession of it, and though persecuted by a fierce enemy of his family, who is determined to obtain possession of it, she sends it back to its true owner in the only way left her. Warn him to be on his guard in protecting it, and be sure that you mention it to no one, and yield it up only into his hands."

She had half-whispered these words, and, after hastily thrusting something under the pillow, she bent over Daisy and dropped a loving kiss upon her forehead, then walked out in her own majestic, imperious fashion, and appeared at the door, where Algeron still detained Madame Blanc.

"You seem to be fond of my company. It is scarcely an hour ago that you left Blenkarne Terrace, and you are again in pursuit of me. Well, what will you have?" she said, in a cold, scornful voice. "What do you wish of me, Madame Blanc?"

"I want a little farther speech with you, my lady. Come into the carriage with me," answered the other. "You called for a glass of water, I understand, and, as you have probably obtained it, there is nothing farther to detain you."

"No, there is nothing to detain me, and, provided you leave me at the Terrace, I have no objection to riding with you," was the indifferent reply.

And her ladyship sauntered carelessly down the walk, stepped lightly into the carriage after the fierce old woman, and was driven away.

Daisy drew one long breath as she turned back to the house. Algeron also looked keenly interested.

"It is quite an adventure," said the latter. "How I longed to ask a few explanations of the lady; for did you know, Daisy, it was none other than Lady Blenkarne?"

"Yes, I knew it was Lady Blenkarne," replied Daisy, her eyes hazy with some dreamy spell. "How gracious and lovely she is! Something in her look moves me strangely. I think I could almost weep because she has gone. Can you understand such an absurd thing?"

"There are many strange experiences that still are not absurd," returned Algeron. "We have all unaccountable impulses and moods which we can never explain. I myself longed to throw myself upon her generosity, tell my story, and ask her assistance; for she is the mistress of Blenkarne Terrace, you remember, and might be able to explain all that is so mysterious to me."

"We shall see her again. She said she would come again," continued Daisy, confidently, and to herself she added: "She will come to see if I have performed the task she set me."

But not a word did she hint to Algeron of what had been said in her room, or of the errand left with her, so strong was her sudden faith and devotion to this new friend.

"I wonder if she has a daughter!" murmured Algeron, frowning a little over his thoughts. "It can hardly be, I think, or this usurper of my name would be there in her stately house instead of down below at the Manor."

"How much did you learn in Liverpool? You have not told me yet," questioned Daisy.

"Just enough to prove to me how difficult will be any attempt on my part to prove my own identity without some powerful evidence from Calcutta. If I could only get a letter from Adam! This fellow has carried out his part well. He has cashed the letters of credit. He has taken possession of two letters directed to my name, and he has won the confidence of Colonel Guy Blenkarne, it seems. So I am afraid when I set up my claim I shall be treated as the impostor. By the way, I bought an India paper from the mail just in, to see if by any good fortune some officer who knows me might not be coming to England. It is in my pocket, and I have not yet examined it. I will look at it now."

He opened the newspaper, glanced at the black lines which edged a long article printed in large type, and with a low exclamation of consternation and horror sank into his seat ejaculating:

"Murdered! General Vansittart murdered! and by Adam! Incredible! impossible! Why, Adam would have died for him any time. No, no, that passes belief. But poor Adam is in prison. Good Heavens! what a nightmare of horrors seem to have fallen upon me."

Daisy, with a few words of tender sympathy, came to his side and took the paper, reading aloud the first sensational reports of the arrest of Adam, and the discovery of the general's wounded body, which news had come across with the same steamer which had brought the two fugitives.

"And now you can no longer receive any aid from Adam," she said, sorrowfully. "It does seem indeed as if a cruel net of fatal circumstances surrounded you. And yet my father's testimony and uncle's ought to avail something."

"If I had not received that fatal declaration from his own lips I should have better heart," said Algeron, ruefully; "but since I know I am not really his son, and have so little information concerning my true rights, I seem powerless to move in any direction. Well, well," he added, in a moment, looking fondly up at her sympathizing face. "I have still good and true friends, Daisy. I have half a mind to put away all old associations and plans, and begin anew for myself. I have nearly exhausted my purse. I must find some work to do."

"Work—for you who have been brought up a gentleman!" cried out Daisy, indignantly.

He shook his head sadly.

"I do not believe I am so helpless as you suppose. But I must do my best to expose this villain that he may not deceive innocent people. I can do so much, whether there is any good result for myself or not. The craven plotter! I am sorely tempted to rush upon him and force him to confess all. And sometimes I believe that would be the most prudent move for me to make."

"Would he be likely to have your belt upon his person?" questioned Daisy, eagerly. "I have not told you of his coming to the cottage while you were gone. I am quite sure he will be here again. He deserves to be caught in such a trap."

"We will see what your grandfather and uncle say. I must do nothing to compromise them in the neighbourhood. My thoughts are with poor Adam! the faithful, noble-hearted fellow! I think it must have been a deathblow to him even to be accused of the murder of his beloved master. I would I could but be there by him a single moment to assure him of my confidence in his innocence. Daisy, I believe I shall go to this Colonel Blenkarne with my story this very day."

(To be continued.)



[RAYMOND STRIKES HOME.]

LOVE'S DREAM AND REALITY; OR, THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

CHAPTER XI.

Let specialties therefore be drawn between us,
That covenants may be kept on either hand.

Shakespeare.

THE surprise of Raymond Singleton at his cousin's announcement, and the rush of recollections, so completely bewildered him that he at first could not utter a word.

But Halstead's voluble welcome, and the consciousness that he was under the observation of many spectators, enabled him to rally his powers, and to murmur a few words of congratulation before he retired.

He sought Myra again as soon as he could reach her for the crowd.

A few questions brought all the facts from the outspoken girl.

She was surprised that Ray should not have heard of her father's marriage, though it had been a sudden thing to everyone. She herself had been astonished, though prepared for it when her father told her he had proposed and was waiting for Miss Kent's answer.

"You see," said the frank maiden, "I always thought papa would be a great match if he could ever make up his mind to take another wife; but when I knew the choice he had made, it seemed natural that my governess should jump at such a chance. It was so far above what she could have expected, you know," she added, in a whisper.

"Certainly," replied Raymond.

"But she did not seem disposed to jump at it, on the contrary, she threw difficulties in the way, and put off her decision. She grew almost melancholy."

"But she must have consented very quickly after her return, for it could not have been before she went to New York."

"New York? What do you mean? She did not go to New York."

"Has not Miss Kent been in New York since I left Halstead Grove, Myra?"

"Not that I know of," retorted the girl, laughing, "and I ought to know certainly. She has not left our house for a day, Cousin Ray."

"Is it possible?"

"Possible? Certainly. How strangely you talk."

"Then my senses must have deceived me."

"I would not trust them if they played you such a trick. But Miss Kent, as I was saying, put off her

decision to wait for some letters she expected; and when they came, and she found that all was satisfactory, she was pleased to smile on her lover's suit. The engagement could not be spoken of, of course, while she was vacillating, and she begged that the wedding might be strictly private. They were married at the Grove, and we came on directly. This is the first bridal reception."

Raymond looked so disturbed Myra thought him offended.

"You see, Cousin Ray, we could not have sent you word even had we known where you were; it was all arranged in such a hurry."

"A hurry indeed," muttered the young man. "And your mother could not be asked; she was ill at the time. We knew she would come to us here. She will come to-morrow, you said, did you not?"

Raymond hardly knew what he said in reply, his thoughts were in a maze of confusion.

The young girl took his arm, and they walked around the rooms.

Ray longed to ask if she was pleased at the match, but he was too generous to suggest a thought of dissatisfaction.

She was thinking how completely his prospects were overturned; that is, if he had been counting on her demise. She laughed merrily as the thought crossed her brain.

"Pray excuse me, Ray," she said, with her accustomed impulsive freedom. "I cannot help laughing to think how rightly you have been punished if you have been plotting how to get rid of me and come in as my father's heir."

"Plotting, Myra. Such a thought never once crossed my mind. You wrong me entirely."

"Then I must ask your pardon."

"What could have put such an idea into your head?"

"Oh, I have heard the whole thing talked about, and how it was supposed papa had planned a match between us, so that he might have a man of his own blood to succeed him."

Raymond's heart sank. He looked in the bright, blooming young face and said:

"I assure you, Myra, such gossip has never reached me, and if it had I should not have regarded it. If I know myself, I am free from the charge of covering another's possessions. Your father is in the prime of manhood, and has a perfect right to please himself. But—"

"But what, Ray?" repeated the girl, archly, and laughing again.

Raymond checked the words upon his lips, and replied gravely:

"But I am grieved to hear you so lightly allude to such a senseless bit of gossip."

"Why should you be grieved?"

"Because—your allusion shows that you care nothing for me."

"That I am heart-whole, you mean?"

"That if you knew how far I am from being so, you would not tantalize me."

"Nonsense!" the girl murmured; but she blushed, and Ray took courage.

"Do you know, Myra, that you are growing more beautiful every day?"

"I know you have learned to flatter since you left us, Ray."

His looks told her he could not "paint the lily." Just then a movement among the guests brought many around them.

"I believe they are going into the supper," said Myra. "Come, Ray, you may have the honour I see numbers are looking for—of taking in the young lady of the house."

"Will you pardon me if I say I cannot remain to supper? I left my mother indisposed. I must leave you now—this moment."

"You are not ambitious, then?" said the lovely girl, smiling, as she accepted the arm of an eager beau who was offering his escort.

"Well, good night. I shall call on Aunt Selina to-morrow."

She always called his mother thus.

With some difficulty young Singleton made his way through the "soit crush" of muslin and silk, and was soon on his way to the hotel.

His mother had retired to her room, and he had leisure for reflection on the strange turn of affairs. That he had really seen Miss Kent in New York he did not doubt. How could his eyes deceive him? Even the dress appeared to be the same. But if a noble husband and a princely estate awaited her acceptance, what could be her motive for assuming a professional name and pursuing a professional career? He was determined to solve the mystery. He would go to her in the morning, and demand a private interview.

He told his mother of Myra's intention to call upon her, and was not sorry the next day, while on his way to his cousin's, to see the Halstead carriage driven out.

Both Halstead and Myra were in it, but he did not stop to speak to them.

His opportunity was clear for a conversation with the newly wedded lady. He sent up his card asking the favour of an interview with her alone.

When the maid who had taken up the message re-

turned she requested him to come upstairs into the "morning-room," a kind of boudoir opening from the dressing-room of Mrs. Halstead, and fitted up for her private use.

The curtains, cushions and upholstery were fine merino, of pale-blue tint, matching the suite of bedroom and dressing-room; the panelling was yellow oak, and highly polished.

There were a piano, a writing-desk, and several choice paintings and engravings, neatly framed, hung on the walls. A worktable stood by the window, filled with delicate materials for a lady's employment, and a few books lay on a table ornamented richly with marquetry. Everything bespoke taste and mental culture, joined to abundant means.

Raymond was standing at the window when the lady entered.

She wore a morning-dress of white, clear muslin, daintily sprigged with yellow, with high corsage. The neck was finished with a collar of French embroidery confined by a brooch of a single large topaz. Its gleam looked sinister. It was the only article of jewellery she wore, except the massive rings upon her fingers.

Raymond thought her very handsome—even more so than she had looked in the evening. There was not a particle of colour in her cheeks, but her creamy, magnolia-leaf complexion was smooth as sculptured marble, and contrasted exquisitely with the bands of purplish-black hair which lay low upon her broad forehead. Her eyes were brilliant as ever, the mouth, full and finely curved, was closed with a resolute expression, that looked—Ray thought—like defiance.

She smiled as she greeted him, but did not offer her hand—a singular omission, which seemed to define the relations between them. Each took seats, and a few words of trifling conversation followed on light topics.

Raymond thought it best to break at once into the matter that pressed on his mind.

"Your journey was even more rapid than mine," he said, significantly; "and so much accomplished since too."

"It is less than a fortnight since we came," she replied, coldly; "but we found the house in readiness to receive us."

"I am not speaking, madam, of the journey here from Virginia, but from York New thither."

"From New York?"

Was her surprise genuine, or consummate acting? thought the young man.

"Surely you cannot fail to understand me?" queried he.

"I certainly do not understand you," she answered. "I have made no journey from New York."

"Did I not see you in that city a few weeks since?"

"Most certainly not."

"Did you sing at a concert—announced as a professional vocalist?"

"I never sang in public, nor as a professional vocalist in my life! This is the second time you have made this assertion, sir."

"Then I must have listened to one who so closely resembles you she would anywhere have been mistaken for yourself."

"That may be so. Strange likenesses often exist between utter strangers."

"But I could have sworn—"

"You saw the singer on the platform. The distance, the lights, the assemblage, the dress, probably combined to aid the deception. The resemblance may not have been so great."

"But the dress—was the same I saw you wear last night," faltered Raymond.

"My wedding dress? Absurd! Oh, what judges men are of dress! I suppose your songstress wore white silk and point lace—did she not?"

Raymond assented.

"Then that was the extent of the likeness. Many evening dresses are of the same materials. They do not render it necessary to prove one's identity."

"It was not only in the dress she was like you," said Ray, stung by her sarcasm. "The form, the features, complexion, air—all were the very same. The voice—"

"You compliment me, sir, in saying that my voice resembles, in singing, that of an admired vocalist."

"The only difference, on the contrary, was in the voice; but not more than might exist in the same person in different styles of music."

Then, suddenly starting, as another recollection swept over him, he added:

"I was close to the lady on two occasions—when I saved her from the insolent intrusion of a man who claimed her as his wife."

He expected to see Mrs. Halstead grow pale with conscious guilt; but not a change passed over her face.

"And you still say, madam, that you were not the lady?"

She lifted to him her eyes full of superb scorn. "There is no need of answering such a question, sir!" she replied.

"I was wrong to expect an answer, certainly," muttered Ray, under his breath.

"Was it but to say such things that you asked for an interview?" asked the lady, rising, as if to terminate the conversation.

"No, madam, I had no wish to give offence. I was so convinced that it was really yourself whom I had seen that I had no thought of anything beyond establishing that fact. I ask your pardon."

Mrs. Halstead took a newspaper from her work-basket.

"Was the singer you heard Madame Brentano?" she inquired.

Raymond sprang up.

"By Jove! the same!" he cried. "That was her name."

"Then you may have an opportunity of seeing her here shortly, and convincing yourself of your mistake," the lady said, pointing to an article among the local items.

It was a mention of a grand charity concert to be given at the mansion of a wealthy gentleman at New Orleans, and the engagement of Madame Brentano, the charming vocalist, who was expected to arrive from New York, etc.

Raymond felt as he read this that he had suffered himself to be egregiously deceived, and he was not above confessing it frankly.

"This was not all you went to discover in New York!" said Mrs. Halstead, after a pause of a few moments. "When we parted at the Grove, I remember, you expressed a determination to hunt down a presuming young lady, who—"

"Who is now safe from my hostility."

"What did you learn, if I may presume to ask?"

Young Singleton drew his chair near to hers and spoke in a very low tone, looking and feeling rather ashamed of himself as he did so.

It was the first time he had ever assumed such an office, and now that the apparent necessity had ceased to exist he would have repudiated his acts could he have done so.

This time there was a change in Mrs. Halstead's looks and manner. A flood of crimson swept over her face, even to her forehead; then, reddening, left it paler than before; tears rushed to her eyes, restrained from falling only by a painful effort; her bosom heaved with emotion. She controlled herself, however, and after a few minutes' silence only said:

"You have the proofs of all this?"

"I have; but—"

"And you intend using them? You have, in truth, hunted me down! I own myself in your power."

"Mrs. Halstead, you mistake me. If you could have judged me fairly before, if you could have seen my real motives, you would not suspect me of an intent so dishonourable."

"Dishonourable? Did you not take pride in your former threats? You wished to save your cousin from a marriage with an 'adventurer'!"

"I wished to prevent a marriage that might have disastrous consequences; to which I thought legal objection might exist that were insuperable."

"You were mistaken there; but the disgrace—as you pleased to term it—is the same."

"No, it is not the same. Mr. Halstead, your husband has so judged; for of course he knows. He knew everything. He would never incur disgrace, were his feelings ever so deeply involved."

The wife uttered a faint cry of anguish, and put up her hands as if to deprecate a crushing blow. Then she clasped them across her forehead, stooped her head, and burst into a passion of tears.

Raymond was deeply distressed.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, repelling his expressions of sympathy; "say nothing more. You have driven me into contrition—into a humiliation I hoped to escape. I have no resource but to throw myself upon your mercy. My husband knows nothing."

"Nothing! Is it possible?"

"It is—it is true. He stopped me when I was striving for courage to confess all; and after that I never dared to venture on the subject. He said he married me for what I was, for he loved me; and I— I loved him."

She wept again—wept so bitterly that Raymond felt how impotent words were to comfort her. Suddenly looking up, she said:

"And now all is at an end. You are going to acquaint my husband with the whole bitter truth."

"How can you think so?" cried the young man, in a voice broken by emotion. "Of what use would it be?"

"Of what use! It might remove me from your path."

"You are cruel, Mrs. Halstead, to misjudge me in

this way. I claim to be a gentleman. I would have made a painful revelation to prevent what I thought would bring misfortune upon an honoured relative; I would bury the secret in the depths of the earth now that its disclosure would afflict a noble soul like Halstead's without doing any good."

"Then you will not—" said the lady, quickly, looking hopefully in his face.

"There is but one thing in the world that would force me to make the disclosure."

"And what is that?"

"Cruelty—tyranny on your part towards Myra."

"Myra! Have I not always loved her?"

"Circumstances may arise to create different feelings. Come, Mrs. Halstead, let us make a compact. I ask your tenderness, your protection, your friendly counsel, for my giddy young cousin—your step-daughter. If you will give this, I will pledge myself to silence on all the matters of which we have been speaking."

"Silence to my husband?"

"To him and all the world—to every human being."

"You are generous, Raymond. I thank you, and will accept the compact."

She held out her hand. He took it and pressed it cordially between his own.

"Now let us talk of other things. Myra is gone with her father to see your mother. Why did you not bring her to us at once?"

"It was her intention to accept my cousin's invitation for the winter. But as things are it is better not—at least I think so."

"No; the visit shall not be given up for my sake. I will go myself and bring her here."

"You are very kind; but the necessity for her presence as a chaperone no longer exists. You had better take my advice and let us remain at the hotel."

"No; you shall both be our guests."

As Raymond hesitated he heard the sound of carriage wheels in the courtyard, and soon after the opening of the hall door. Merry voices followed and hurrying feet ran up the stairs.

Presently Myra burst in, full of wild glee, and laughing at her father, who followed her at a slower pace. She was full of the grand concert to be given at the house of one of their fashionable friends, "Aunt Selma" was going and so must Raymond, of course. Halstead threw his arm forcibly round his wife's waist and promised attendance for her and himself.

CHAPTER XII.

You have displac'd the mirth, broke the good meeting.

With most admired disorder. *Shakespeare.*

THE leaders in New Orleans society will long remember the brilliant concert given in aid of the Founding Society, by the gay and fashionable Mrs. Miniver, at her princely mansion.

It was thought that the assemblage would be more select held in her magnificent drawing-rooms, and the music-room occupying equal space on the other side of the hall.

The latter was, in fact, well adapted for a concert room, being furnished with moveable seats of polished walnut, and communicating by two pairs of folding-doors with the hall, so that it might be made one with the suite of drawing-rooms, and thus as spacious as any public hall in the city.

On one side of the music-room a platform was elevated, and there were small retiring-rooms curtained off, and a space for the orchestra.

In the interval of the music the guests might promenade through the drawing-rooms, or descend to the conservatories, which opened out of the large library on the ground-floor, and extended to the extremity of the grounds.

Mrs. Miniver was a wealthy widow, having only a nephew living with her, and was active in all schemes of benevolence. She took pride also in furnishing her mansion like a fairy palace.

The various parlours were in the styles of successive French monarchs; the large drawing-room was a wonder of upholstery and rich oil paintings imported from Italy, Germany and Holland.

There were marvels of statuary also, and many a time had the house been filled with curious visitors to see a new group in marble or a painting by some world-renowned master.

Mrs. Miniver claimed to be a liberal patroness of the fine arts.

In music she seldom heard of a celebrated artist that she did not send for him or her to grace her musical receptions, given in winter once a fortnight, and enlivened with dances.

On this occasion she had thrown open her house for the use of a committee of lady managers of the charitable institution they wished to benefit.

The affair was to be half a concert, half a social party, under the auspices of those managers, of whom only tickets could be procured.

They had devised the thing after having engaged the powerful aid of Madame Brentano.

The élite of the town were assembled, and the scene was brilliant indeed.

No private entertainment had ever been given on so large a scale.

The vast dining-room, opposite the library and reception-rooms, was set out with long tables, covered with snowy damask, cut glass of gorgeous tints, and a splendid display of silver and Sèvres porcelain, for the evening was too close with a supper given by the munificent hostess.

As on a stage the different persons who figure in this story appeared at intervals.

Colonel Atherton had prevailed on his young friend, Rupert Edgerly, to accompany him, though his deep mourning kept him from merely social assemblages.

They took seats on the left, at a distance from the platform.

Though the rooms were crowded with superbly-dressed ladies, a sensation was created by the entrance of the Halstead party.

Myra availed herself to the fullest extent of the liberty she claimed of indulging her taste in dress. She was attired in pink silk, with white silk overdress, richly flounced and trimmed with white thread lace.

A scarf of white Brussels lace was thrown over her shoulders, and a delicate barb floated from the knot on the back of her head, mingled with a shower of blonde ringlets.

Myra revelled in her empire of loveliness and taste. Her entrance into society had opened a new world to her, and she had assumed the insignia of royalty belonged to her as its young queen. Her white-gloved hand rested lightly on Raymond's arm, and they were followed by his mother, escorted by a friend; while lastly came Mr. and Mrs. Halstead.

Clarice was disposed to shrink from society. She was dressed with scrupulous plainness, and kept her black lace veil drawn over her face.

By her desire, her husband led her to a retired seat, whence, however, a good view of the platform was commanded.

The orchestra was from the French opera, hired at a high price for this occasion.

After the overture, and one or two solos from minor performers, the lady who was the great attraction of the evening came forward amid applause of the most enthusiastic kind.

She wore a light-coloured moiré, with long train and overskirt of cloudy lace; the corsage, à la Pompadour, and deep falls of lace shading her finely-moulded arms. A coronet of rubies and pearls encircled her head, confining the braids of black hair, glossy as the raven's wing.

To several in the audience her appearance brought a thrill of emotion.

Raymond gazed upon her with breathless excitement.

The extraordinary likeness to his cousin's wife was as striking as ever; the features were absolutely the same. Only he observed that the singer had colour in her cheeks; a bright, yet delicate carmine, that never left them entirely; and her eyes—the same in shape and hue—were more restless than flashing. He recognized her voice, that pure, rich soprano, the moment its rippling melody was heard.

He glanced involuntarily towards Clarice, as if conscious that she could not fail to excuse him, seeing her counterpart.

She had thrown back her veil, and was gazing entranced on the songstress, drinking in the delicious music, and fully exonerating poor Ray in her thoughts, while she wondered if any one had ever considered her half so beautiful.

Her husband whispered:

"She is very much like you, Clarice, dear, is she not? Only nothing like so handsome as yourself." Colonel Atherton, in his remote corner, watched with covert smiles the effect produced on Rupert.

He seemed "carried away," as the phrase is, by the beauty and genius of the fair vocalist. The colour had rushed to his pale cheeks, his lips were parted in his eager attention, his neck was outstretched as if he would gladly annihilate the space intervening.

His elderly friend was pleased to see that so rare a treat in art could draw him out of his melancholy.

With different feelings two others looked on.

Myra's attention was fixed not on the singer, but on a group near the platform, a little on the right side—a lady and gentleman.

The lady was extravagantly dressed, and might be called young; the gentleman—in whom she at once recognized Fred Hobart—was bending towards her and looking in her face, as she remembered he had formerly looked into hers.

They whispered together in spite of the music, and once or twice were repressed by an audible "Hush!" from those nearest to them.

Myra regarded them with the greatest displeasure

as the young man had already sent her the evidence of his presence in town and his claims on her loving remembrance.

The concert lasted an hour and a half; then many of the guests adjourned to the drawing-room, while others promenaded or descended for refreshments.

The supper-table was served by a score of waiters, and those who came were helped whenever they pleased.

Myra stood by the banisters above, and saw Fred leading into the dining-room the lady with whom he had been talking.

She noticed that she was beautiful, and that her companion seemed to appreciate her charms. He looked at her with his whole soul in his eyes, and looked at no one else.

The jealous young girl felt as if she could have screamed aloud. She leaned far over the railing, and even waved her handkerchief, that her recreant lover might look up and catch the glance of withering scorn she was ready to fling at him.

Ray was beside her and noticed the action. He too saw Fred with the lady, and he was not slow to associate the cause and effect when Myra raised her flushed and angry face.

"Do you know who she is?" he whispered.

"No."

"I will inquire, if you would like to know."

He left her for a moment and presently returned.

"The lady is Mrs. Wetmore, a wealthy widow. The gentleman, who seems so devoted—"

"Hush, Ray! I don't want to hear his name mentioned here."

"I am glad you despise him, Myra; he is worthy of your contempt."

"He does it on purpose to vex me!" muttered the girl. "He knew I was coming here. He shall pay for this!"

Just then the object of her displeasure turned and looked upward. Their eyes met. Fred smiled and made a graceful bow, which the young girl noticed only by a glance of resentful scorn.

She saw her lover take a step backward as if he would gladly have sought her; but the fair widow called him, and he was in an instant at her side, as devoted as ever.

Ray saw all this with secret exultation, but he dared not speak. He would let the girl's wounded pride do its work.

Again Fred turned, as if for another glance, but he was interrupted.

Myra saw a rough-looking man, in a dress bordering on the shabby-genteel, press through the throng and seize his arm, hissing in his ear:

"I have found her! I have found her!"

Fred shook off his grasp and significantly pointed to the lady on his arm.

"I tell you it is the same!" exclaimed the man.

"She is in the drawing-room. Come with me and tell me what you think of her."

"But, my dear fellow, don't you see I must attend to Mrs. Wetmore?"

"Oh, never mind me," simpered the fair widow. "I shall find some one to take care of me."

She drew her arm from the gentleman's as she spoke.

"As if I would be robbed of the honour and the pleasure," cried young Hobart. "Allow me"—and seizing her hand he drew it within his arm, pressing it as he did so. "Blake, old fellow, stand out of the way, if you please."

The two went into the supper-room.

The man who had stopped them, with a wild gesture, turned and made his way through the crowd back again.

Raymond hurried on his young cousin.

"No, Ray, I have changed my mind," she exclaimed. "I do not want anything. I will go back to the drawing-room. You may go on if you like."

"How could I wish to go on without you?" whispered he. "I will take you back and then bring you an ice."

"I wish I could go home," said the girl. "Where is mamma?"

"Mrs. Halstead is in the music-room still, I believe. You must not leave us, Myra."

In the drawing-room the hostess and some of the fair managers were presenting guests to Madame Brentano.

The singer received them with grace and ease, the ease of a lady accustomed to the courtesies of well-bred society.

Even and anon she turned to make or listen to some remarks from Rupert Edgerly, who stood beside her, absorbed in admiration.

She could not help perceiving the impression she had made, for she smiled graciously and talked with him much more than with any one else.

Rupert learned that she was to make a stay of some weeks in New Orleans, and to appear in opera before her departure.

Her piquant, fervid style of beauty was matched by the animation of her conversation. In face, voice and manner she bloomed like a tropical flower.

As Ray approached her—the petulant Myra had gone to the dressing-room—he saw more clearly the difference between her and Clarice Halstead.

The latter was uniformly pale, though with a clear and healthy complexion, and had eyes full of gentle melancholy; the singer had a gleam of almost feverish brightness in her cheeks, and a lightning flash in her eyes, called forth by the slightest change of feeling. As she spoke the play of feature and colour was wonderful, and, with the Oriental style of her loveliness, it produced a marvellous effect.

Colonel Atherton, like Rupert, had been presented to her, but he made no attempt to enter into conversation.

He smiled as he saw how completely his young friend was fascinated, and rejoiced again that he could be won to forgetfulness of his grief.

"Ah, young hearts! young hearts!" he muttered. "And such a face! 'Tis curious where I can have seen it before. It strikes me as familiar."

He sauntered up to the hostess, and from her learned some particulars as to her distinguished guest.

She was not married, Mrs. Miniver said. It had been only a year or two since she had entered the profession as a vocalist; he might see she was young. She must possess genius, or she could not have attained to such excellence in art without the advantage of foreign training.

Atherton had heard the finest artists abroad; and the fresh, bird-like quality of her voice pleased him more than the result of scientific study. He asked if she were a widow.

"I suppose so," Mrs. Miniver said, "though people say the name is only assumed. She is certainly a native of this country, and has never left it."

"Strange," muttered the colonel. "I have certainly seen her somewhere before."

A stranger was slowly crossing the room, making his way listlessly among the guests, yet evidently determined to approach the object of general attention.

She was conversing with young Edgerly, and did not observe him.

He went up, hesitatingly, to the hostess, and held out a card.

"May I ask the favour of your presenting me to Madame Brentano?" he said.

The lady looked at the card, then at the gentleman. She was plainly at a loss what to do. Presently she said:

"I have not the pleasure of knowing you, sir; and I cannot—Oh, here is Mrs. Davis, one of the committee. Mrs. Davis, this gentleman—is he known to you?"

Mrs. Davis shook her head. It had been understood that many who had purchased tickets to the concert were not exactly admissible to the social circle in which the fair aristocrats moved; and the ladies were jealous of any intrusion on their select sphere.

The man appeared not a little irritated at this refusal to recognize his claim. He pointed savagely to young Edgerly.

"There's a gentleman who knows me very well," he said, with a vicious grin. "You might ask him to present me to the lady, as he seems intimate with her."

Rupert was well known, and esteemed as a gentleman of high honour and standing.

Mrs. Davis went towards him and called his name.

"Here's a gentleman, Mr. Edgerly, who says he is acquainted with you, and wishes to be presented to Madame Brentano."

Rupert came forward with alacrity.

When his glance fell on the sullen-looking man who stood expectant he recoiled with an expression of surprise and dismay. He grew pale as death, and could not utter another word.

"You see," said the stranger, "Mr. Edgerly remembers me."

Both the ladies bowed and turned away.

"We meet again at last," said Martin Blake, fixing his eyes on Rupert's face, and laughing softly to himself. "And I don't see what you should be afraid of, that you hesitate to acknowledge a relation."

Rupert met the gaze of the man whom his father had forbidden him to recognize, whose guilt he had recently learned. He shuddered, and then turned away without uttering a word.

"Don't you know me, Rupert?" asked Blake, with a brutal exclamation in an undertone.

"I know you well, Miles Seaton," replied the young man. "Better than you think."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Your conscience may inform you what I mean!"

answered Edgerly, walking towards the end of the room.

"You shall pay dearly for this insolence?" muttered the intruder, angrily, following him a few steps. "And if you won't introduce me like a gentleman to the lady, I'll introduce myself, and you shall see with what effect."

He strode up to Madame Brentano, who had been in conversation with some persons near her, and had seen nothing of what had passed.

Before the stranger could speak she caught sight of him.

The smile froze on her face, the colour retreated from her cheeks—from her very lips. She uttered a low gasping cry, and stepped back to avoid him as he pressed nearer.

Then grasping the chair with one hand, she flung out the other as if to ward off some blow, and sank back in a death-like swoon.

(To be continued.)

JOSEPHINE BEAUVILLIERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Juliette's Secret," "The Rose of Kendale," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A villain with a smiling cheek
Is like a goodly apple rotten at the core.

Shakespeare.

DIANA walked into the surgery, having concealed the note in her pocket.

The doctor was not troubled with much curiosity—he never busied himself about the affairs of the house—and when Diana said simply "a little note for me," he was quite satisfied, and inquired no farther.

Soon after this the good doctor asked his beautiful daughter to mix him a glass of grog.

While he sat, sipping it and smoking a cigar, Diana watched him with painful feelings.

He was so happy in the anticipation of the splendid match which he believed his daughter was about to make; and it was sad to think that he was to be disappointed—nay, that perhaps humiliation would be added to his disappointment.

Diana covered her eyes with her hands, and she thought bitterly for a few moments.

Something like self-reproach mingled in with her feelings.

She had not behaved generously towards Colonel Hastings.

She had accepted him while her heart was beating warmly for her father's assistant, Paul Clement.

Afterwards, when she had discovered this, which had been a secret even from herself, she had resolved to repudiate the engagement, to restore the jewels; and flying out madly to do this, she had brought all the anxiety upon her spirit and suspicion upon her name which enveloped her young life like a shroud.

The good doctor smoked on unconsciously, finished his grog, then embraced his daughter, and went to see that the hall door was safe; then he mounted the stairs to his room.

Diana, too, took her bedroom candlestick, and went up to her chamber.

But instead of undressing she put on a black cloak and hood, drew on a pair of boots, and put on some large list slippers to disguise the noise of her feet.

She went down her back staircase key in hand, let herself through to her private garden, and then, with a second key, she passed through the gate which led into the street.

Once arrived there, she drew off the list slippers and hurried along in the direction of the old houses mentioned in the letter which she believed she had received from the detective.

The rain had ceased now, and the moon was shining brightly.

She perceived soon a policeman. Fortunate would it have been for Diana had she engaged the services of this guardian of the peace.

He probably thought Diana was some servant hurrying to a house where there had been a party that she might walk home with her mistress. And so Diana passed on through various streets until she reached the river bank.

There she turned to the left, and found herself in an old dilapidated court, marked out by the committee of the Board of Health for destruction.

Tall, villainous-looking houses, with rags stuffed into the broken panes of the windows, showed gaunt and grim in the moonbeams.

"The detective might have chosen a pleasanter residence," thought Diana.

Then she went curiously scanning the doors that she might discover the numbers.

Before long she discovered one with No. 15 marked upon it in white chalk.

She looked about for bell-handle or knocker, but there was neither.

Then she thought she must rap against the door with her fingers, and in doing this it gave way—in fact it was left ajar.

She made her way in, and something like a thrill shot through her frame as her feet echoed over the loose, worm-eaten boards of the passage.

She heard no other sound, and she began to wonder curiously whether she had mistaken the house.

She advanced a few more steps timidly, when she heard a voice crying—a voice harsh, sharp, disguised, hoarse—a voice whose sex it was difficult to determine.

"Come up here," said the voice.

Diana mounted the creaking staircase.

The voice still invited her to mount higher.

She went on; passed the first landing. On the second was a lantern burning dimly.

Diana mounted, and soon she perceived a door ajar, a lantern standing on the floor, and two figures, apparently females, one on each side of the lantern.

A very revulsion of feeling seized her—then she suspected treachery. She turned and began to descend the stairs hastily. Immediately the two women swooped down upon her, like eagles on their prey.

Before she had reached the bottom landing her foes were upon her. Each shoulder was clutched by a vulture-like hand. She attempted to scream, but a handkerchief was forced into her mouth. She struggled violently, but sticky hands and desperate brute force completely overpowered her. Then came a stunning blow on the temple, and Diana lost all consciousness.

The moon was still shining very brightly when two female figures emerged from that grim house with the large chalk marks of No. 15 on the door.

At first they encountered no one, but at the corner of the street there was an old beggar-man, tottering home at that late hour—half-past twelve—with his wallet on his back. He perceived the two women; and it was curious that he should have turned his head over his shoulder to look after them.

It was a long time before either of these persons spoke. They did not turn their steps towards the town but kept along by the bank of the river, and presently they turned to the right, across some swampy, lonely fields, where ran deep ditches and where grew low pollard willows.

The two women without fear sat down upon the damp grass, under shelter of one of these willows, which sufficiently hid them from any prying eyes, if any prying eyes were abroad on that moonlight night.

"She will tell no tales now," observed the voice of Mrs. Childerstone, and she laughed a hideous laugh.

It might have been that the nerves of her companion had received a shock, for there was something tremulous in her tones as she replied:

"For goodness' sake I leave off talking of her."

But the woman only laughed again.

"I ain't so squeamish," she said, "I ain't afraid of a piece of work like that. I've done it before."

Mrs. Wilcox—for it is useless to disguise that Mrs. Wilcox and Mrs. Childerstone are the dramatic persons now brought before the reader's notice—Mrs. Wilcox involuntarily shuddered, for there are degrees in wickedness, and perhaps in the exercise of mere brute force and the nerve which aids in the committing of acts of violence Mrs. Wilcox may have owned her inferiority to the redoubtable Mrs. Childerstone.

"I've done it afore," repeated the woman of the barn, "and I'll have to do it again some of these nights when he brings home a lot of money from market late, and after the banks are closed. It haven't happened yet since I've been there; but it have happened and he told me of it, and it will happen again."

She nodded her head with an air of brutal determination.

"You are too bold," said Mrs. Wilcox, "some day you'll mount the steps from which you'll never come down alive."

The teeth of Mrs. Wilcox chattered as she spoke with something akin to fear. The woman of the barn only laughed more hoarsely.

"Come, let us to business," said Mrs. Wilcox. "Now then, I will give you another cheque. You shall draw out a hundred and eighty pounds from Postham, that's where I bank, at Messrs. Starkeys and Roberts's, and then you shall give me the jewels."

"And you'll sell 'em for five hundred," remarked the woman of the barn.

Mrs. Wilcox smiled a cunning smile, but the darkness hid it from the eyes of her companion, for the women were shaded very much by the branches of the pollard willow. In her heart she knew well, this Mrs. Wilcox, that with care in choosing her customers she might contrive to sell the large rubies

and sparkling diamonds of Colonel Hastings for a sum which would enable her to purchase a small landed estate.

Mrs. Wilcox was keen, shrewd, patient, unscrupulous and thoroughly merciless. She was one of those beings well calculated to get on in the world.

"I daresay I may get a few pounds more than I have offered you," said Mrs. Wilcox, meekly, and with a repetition of that cunning smile, which the other woman did not see. "But, you know, I take more risk than you take. I give you the money, it will be supposed for a little house of yours down in Wiltshire. We will draw up an agreement between us for appearance's sake. If you decide to keep the jewels and to sell them yourself, you will find yourself in a strange fix."

And Mrs. Wilcox laughed spitefully.

"You don't know how to sell such ornaments," she continued. "You would take them to some Jew brokers. You would perhaps get twenty pounds for them altogether, and then they would lead to your detection."

Mrs. Childerstone emitted a peculiar sound, part grunt, part growl, and part bitter laugh. She saw the force and the truth of what Mrs. Wilcox had uttered. She felt that the hundred and eighty pounds offered by that wary dame was all she could claim, or was likely to gain as the price of her bold robbery in the barn.

"Well," she said, at length, "you may as well give me one cheque for a hundred and eighty, and we'll draw up that there 'greement. But I must be toddling off home now, I've the key to let me in the back-way. And I must manage to do it tidy and quiet. And mind to-morrow as you comes up with the money or the cheque, and you shall have the things."

The two women then rose from their seat under the pollard willow, and they took their way to the river's bank, and from thence into the town. At the bridge they parted, Mrs. Childerstone taking her way towards Dighting's Farm, and Mrs. Wilcox taking the road home.

She had a great deal of difficulty in knocking up her little servant; but at last she managed to get in, with a plausible excuse for her late arrival, and assigning an important letter which she had left behind in mistake as the reason for her not having remained with her friends that night.

How did Mrs. Wilcox sleep in the shabby-genteel little bed to which she retired? We are not in a position to state. She may have turned restlessly from side to side. Whether she was frightened of the darkness, whether evil dreams came to her, we know not.

The morning found her alert and smiling, neatly dressed in a lavender-coloured rep, bustling about downstairs while making her tea, and giving various directions to her small servant. She was going to be out the whole day, she said. She was obliged to give her attention to a suffering friend. She left the servant half a red herring, half an ounce of tea, and some cut bread and butter. These were to be the small domestic provision for the day.

Then Mrs. Wilcox put on her bonnet and shawl and took the way which led towards St. Peter's Street.

Arrived there, she knocked at the door, and entered the hall with a smiling face, asking for Mrs. Dalby.

The sun was shining brightly, the lady was smiling blandly—there was no outward change in the appearance of the handsome hall of Doctor Dalby—but what a panic had fallen on the quiet household.

Diana has disappeared in the night.

She had taken nothing with her, save her cloak and her hood and the two keys—one opening the door which led from the stairs into the garden, and another that which led from the garden into the street.

Mrs. Dalby was as pale as a ghost, and was walking about the house in her morning-wrapper, and with disordered hair.

The doctor looked ten years older than he had looked the day before—his face was haggard, his eyes sparkled with excitement.

The servants went about with distraught and almost terrified air, and at the door of the surgery appeared the handsome head of Paul Clement, the hair somewhat disordered, the cheeks pale, the lips set.

What a distressed household was that of the doctor on that fine spring morning!

As yet the amiable Mrs. Wilcox had heard nothing.

She was supposed to have entered the well-ordered household, wondering a little at the signs of perturbation manifested by the doctor and his family.

Mrs. Dalby threw up her hands and eyes, and motioned Mrs. Wilcox to enter the dining-room and close the door, and then and there she burst into a flood of tears.

"Diana, Diana," she sobbed forth. "Diana has run away."

"No more than I expected," cried Mrs. Wilcox, piously closing her eyes and shaking her head. "Ah, if I had only been permitted last evening to speak to the poor, dear doctor this might have been averted." "Would to Heaven that you had," cried Mrs. Dalby. "Mieguided girl—she is probably married to some upstart."

"They say that the object of her affections was a pawnbroker's assistant," observed Mrs. Wilcox, with a bland smile.

Mrs. Dalby sat down, wept hysterically and tapped her heels upon the floor.

At that moment the door burst open and Doctor Dalby entered.

"I say, madam—Mrs. Wilcox," he burst forth, "my wife tells me that you have heard certain things against my daughter, my Diana. Why, in Heaven's name, madam, did you not speak out—speak to me if you knew or suspected that she had any thoughts of a confounded low fellow?"

"Oh, stop, stop, sir, pray stop!" cried Mrs. Wilcox, putting her hands to her ears; "such violent language is irreligious, and I cannot permit myself to listen to it. Last night your dear wife tried to tell you something—and if you remember, you refused to listen to it."

"Most true," cried Mrs. Dalby, "most true. Mrs. Wilcox is a real friend."

"I strive to be so," said that pious lady, closing her eyes.

"You should have spoken out, you should have roared it in my ears, in spite of me," cried Doctor Dalby, stamping angrily upon the floor.

Mrs. Wilcox shook her head again.

"I spoke," she said, "I did my best, and my conscience is clear."

The pious lady folded her hands across her breast, and cast her eyes up more than ever.

In the opinion of Mrs. Dalby the effect was sublime.

"Oh, my friend, my friend," she said, "would that that ungrateful and misguided girl had listened to your warning voice."

"She always disliked me," said Mrs. Wilcox, very meekly. "But it is the lot of those who do their duty in this world to be disliked, despised and misjudged."

Doctor Dalby was walking up and down the room impatiently. Every now and then he turned his face towards his wife and her friend, and he uttered loud, angry words.

"It is all such a lot of humbug, all this talk," he said, "when the mischief is done. My girl, my Diana—I would have staked my very life upon her truth and now, even now, I feel as though she surely were the victim of some outrageous plot."

He turned round suddenly and faced Mrs. Wilcox as he spoke.

That amiable lady in spite of herself winced under his searching glance.

At the same time she seemed to be moved by a transient gleam of anger. She shrugged her shoulders, and her gentle smile became somewhat bitter.

"Some diabolical plot," continued the doctor, stamping his foot.

And he glared quite fiercely at Mrs. Wilcox.

That saint-like lady could not meet his eyes so she took refuge in a clean white handkerchief, and she commenced sobbing, although there was not a single tear shed by her.

"There is no doubt," she said, between her sobs, "that poor dear Diana has fallen, as you say, a victim to a diabolical plot. She has become the prey of some vile adventurer, who has married her for the sake of her two hundred a year."

"And how the deuce, madam, did you know that she had two hundred a year?" demanded the doctor, furiously. "Who put you in possession of the knowledge of our family affairs? But I suppose that is my wife; she does not know how to keep her own counsel."

"You have always indulged that girl too much," cried Mrs. Dalby. "Now see what your false indulgence has brought her to—disgrace and ruin."

"I'll make whoever has said that prove it," said the doctor. "See, Mrs. Wilcox, what is your story? Let us have it again. You say that my daughter has eloped with a pawnbroker's assistant."

"Of very low habits," amended Mrs. Wilcox, wiping her eyes and sighing a pious sort of sigh.

"Confound it!" said the angry doctor, "I asked you nothing about his habits. I only asked you for the sweet story as all you women repeat it in this scandalous, evil-speaking town of Northwick St. John's. You say she has eloped—she has gone off to be married. Where is the disgraced name you talk about? She is as honourably the wife of this pawnbroker's assistant as she would have been the wife of Colonel Hastings had she married him. If she

has chosen to break her old father's heart, and to throw away her fortune and herself upon a worthless fellow—if I say she has chosen to do this—what in Heaven's name, can it matter to all you women of Northwick St. John's?"

He stamped again impatiently as he spoke.

Mrs. Wilcox had another sigh and another smile ready. She put on her most becoming air of a martyr, and then she said:

"It is such a comfort to have one's conscience clear in these matters, and dear Mrs. Dalby knows I have always spoken for the best. It may be true, Doctor Dalby,—and a sarcastic gleam shot out of the lady's sharp little eyes—"it may be true there is no disgrace, and I sincerely hope there is not."

Here Mrs. Wilcox pursed up her lips very tightly indeed, and the expression on her thin face said more plainly than any mere words could have spoken: "I sincerely hope that there are shame and disgrace, and everything else that you dread."

After this Mrs. Wilcox would have cast her eyes up to Heaven, if it had been possible, but seeing that was not possible, since she was seated in the doctor's dining-room, she satisfied herself with looking up to the ceiling.

"Nobody can tell how much I pity you, Doctor Dalby."

"And I don't want your pity, madam!" cried the doctor. "I'd rather be without it."

"You must not mind him," said Mrs. Dalby, turning to Mrs. Wilcox. "He really hardly knows what he is saying."

"Do not apologize, dear madam," said Mrs. Wilcox. And here she rose to her feet, preparatory to taking her departure. "I am accustomed to misconception and to bearing blame where it is not deserved. You know we are taught that it is our duty to submit to false accusations, meekly and patiently, and I have always striven to live up to those maxims."

After this Mrs. Dalby embraced her friend affectionately, and then Mrs. Wilcox left the house. She screwed her mouth up very tightly as she passed down St. Peter's Street. There was a sly smile, more in her eyes than in her lips. When she neared the bridge she tried to look studiously away from the right bank of the river, which led towards the street to which Diana had been enticed the evening before. But some power stronger than herself compelled Mrs. Wilcox to walk to the bridge, lean over the parapet and look towards the tall houses, shabby and gaunt and dismantled, in one of which so piteous a deed had been committed the night before.

The smile left her mouth, a gray pallor spread itself over her features, a sudden chill seemed to curdle her blood, and her flesh crept although it was a warm spring morning and the bright sun was casting golden gleams on the flowing river. Looking towards the house, whose dingy roof she could discern from where she stood, she perceived, sailing slowly over it, blotting out portions of the fine morning sky as it hovered backwards and forwards, a huge black raven.

Chained to the spot stood the amiable Mrs. Wilcox, chained to the spot as if spell-bound, and the raven sailed to and fro, and she could hear its croaking.

In the town the voice of scandal was already busy with the name of fair Diana Dalby, but no one in that town divined or guessed by the faintest suspicion what had really been her fate.

Mrs. Wilcox stood watching the flight of the raven and listening to its dismal croaking. And standing there, the woman was a strange, almost an appalling spectacle, with her gray face, her fixed eyes full of terror, her nervous, trembling hands clutching convulsively at the parapet of the bridge. At last with a mighty effort she turned away resolutely, and directed her steps towards Dighting's Farm.

(To be continued.)

A PATENT PIANO PLAYER.—Learning to play on the pianoforte is to become a thing of the past! A patent piano player has just been invented by a Frenchman, by means of which, it is said, the veriest novice can perform the most difficult pieces. The instrument is thus described:—It occupies a position in front of the keyboard of the piano, and extends from above it to the floor. Over the keys of the piano are keys corresponding to those beneath them. These are the fingers of the machine, and they have a finger for every note. The top of the machine is about one foot in width, and has in the centre two rollers, which are moved by a crank. These carry the music through, and as it passes the piano plays it. The music is on paper, and the notes are made by cutting holes in squares. As these holes pass a certain point they allow a hammer to pass through, and the stroke of that hammer is communicated to its own key on the piano. Each key has its hammer. It only requires that these holes be

cut at proper intervals to strike any number of keys in given series. The machine can be adapted to any instrument with keys.

THE LITTLE PRINCESS.

CHAPTER XI.

At the sight of Flor's tears a strange choking feeling came into Seymour Hurst's throat—a strange pain seized his heart.

He stood confused, troubled, serious.

"Forgive me, Flor, if I injured your feeling. I would not have done it knowingly for worlds." His voice was broken; that touched Flor.

"Oh, I daresay I was foolish—I daresay it was contemptible in me to mind it," she said, dashing the tears away. And very beautiful she looked, for she had instinctively removed the masculine ornaments from her face. "It was all forgiven, Mr. Hurst—at least, I hope so. I want now but one thing—to see John Hubert Irvington."

"I never knew there was a Hubert in his name."

"But there is."

"Will you go home with me, to my Sister Mary? I live at Beryton, and Mr. Irvington is my next neighbour."

Flor clasped her hands, mute with delight that she should see her enemy at last.

Seymour Hurst stepped aside a moment.

It was a frivolous thing to do, to lift the carved ornament on the mantel, but the truth was, something down deep in his heart caused his face to change so suddenly.

Great Heaven! was the fate upon him to love her, after all? he asked himself. Had he been loving her all this while, with a passion that but this moment flashed upon his perception, rushed through his whole being in its fulness and intensity, moving him as no other love had ever done?

"You will go, Flor?"

He had turned, having gained the mastery over his countenance.

"Oh, yes, but—"

She looked down, distressed again.

"Never mind the dress. Mary will fit you out," he said, smiling a little. "You are both of a size." She lifted her beaming face, answering his smile. All the old animosity was forgotten.

Again his emotion nearly staggered him, but his will was a match for the strongest. He helped her into the carriage he had called, and they drove to Beryton.

"It's all right. He will call on you this afternoon."

So said Seymour Hurst, entering the little drawing-room where Flor sat, engaged in sewing. A beautiful flush mounted to either cheek as she received this news.

"How old is the child, Mr. Hurst?"

"Five, I think, and terribly deformed."

"Poor little soul," murmured Flor. "Well, I can be very tender of her, for pity, and for love, too, perhaps."

Seymour turned abruptly away.

"Flor," said Mary, quickly, when he had gone out, "my brother loves you."

"You should not tell me that," murmured Flor, controlling her voice.

"He is the soul of honour," Mary continued. "Do you know he was almost engaged to be married to the girl that Mr. Irvington married?"

Flor started—one hand clasped the other nervously.

"He was. But I don't think he ever knew what love was till now. Not that he has told me by word or sign; I have found it out."

"He is too proud to love one who has been before the public, as I have," Flor forced herself to say. "He is very proud—so proud that I believe he lives wholly above the opinion of the world."

Flor trembled from head to foot. She had no time to analyze or indulge her emotions, however, for John Irvington was in the porch. Face to face with him, how stately and composed she grew! On his part he was charmed with his new governess, engaging her before he had talked five minutes.

"There's a face for you!" he said to himself. "Ah! but, John Irvington, it was not the face the old woman showed you at Breslau."

Seymour went over with her to Willoway, and John Irvington scowled when he met him.

"Shall I call now and then?" Seymour asked, humbly, as he parted with her on the threshold of that great drawing-room.

"Come often—do come often. Yours will be the only welcome face in this house," Flor had whispered.

And she was left alone with her sickly, fretful, pining charge. Months passed, and the little one loved her as she loved no other inmate of Willoway.

"She doesn't take to me," said Mrs. Collins, querulously. The poor woman's trials had hurried on her second childhood. This she said as she sat in the drawing-room, one afternoon, while Flor was caressing her charge.

"And I don't want her to take to me," cried Mary Collins, rising as she spoke, and leaving the room.

"Don't mind her, dear," said the elderly woman, who seemed attracted by the orphan. "She hates everything in this house, from the master down. Do you know he's been persecuting her this six months, and his poor wife only dead a year? Yes, broke off a beautiful match, my dear, because he says he wants her himself. Ah! he must do as he pleases; you see he has got the power over us, child—he has got the power over us."

"What power?" asked Flor, indignantly.

"Don't ask me, dear. It will all be ended when Mary and I are in our graves; and, oh, that it may be soon!"

"Bear it a little longer," said Flor, pitifully. "Heaven will not surely allow this iniquity to prosper."

"Well, it has prospered, my dear," was the quiet, hopeless reply.

Flor saw the master's features change whenever he came into her presence, and she loathed the change.

He did not disguise that he was beginning to be passionately fond of her.

This gave her one advantage—she could turn him to her will—there was nothing he would resist her.

"Mr. Irvington," she said, one evening, after supper, "could you as well as not give me another room?"

He looked up anxiously, the muscles around his mouth twitching strangely.

"Is—there anything an-ny-ing in there?"

"It may be my fancy, but I do not rest well; it may be in my dreams that the old man comes, but—"

"What!" half shouted the master of Willoway, his voice hoarse as he started to his feet.

"I said it might be fancy, but as it has appeared every night—Mr. Irvington, what has happened? Are you ill?"

He was looking down the room with an absorbed, a fascinated gaze.

Suddenly he shivered, touched his forehead, laughed, and nervously clutched at the top of the table.

"You said you saw—"

"Oh, it is nothing very terrible," said Flor, calmly, "even if it should be a spirit (for I hear Willoway is haunted), I need not fear. I never harmed any one in my life."

Her clear eyes were raised to his troubled ones. She had begun a torture which was to probe his soul to the quick. Not that she was cruel or remorseless, but she knew the bad man with whom she had to deal—knew there were no other means in her power by which justice could be hoped for.

"Upon my word, I'm getting quite used to my old friend," said Flor, smiling, one morning.

"What! he follows you then? you certainly moved—"

"Oh, yes! I moved into the other room, but he seems quite as much at home there. I had the best view of him last night; an old man, small of stature, with the softest, most silvery hair falling from broad white temples. His face looks so kind, so benevolent! the dearest old face I ever saw! I really think that in time, he will speak to me."

"You—you are—not—frightened?" asked John Irvington, who had turned ghastly pale, "you would—that is—not be afraid to speak to him?"

"Why should I?" asked Flor. "I never harmed him, the dear old man! I wonder what can make him so uneasy that he can't rest in his grave?"

John Irvington said nothing; he arose, and moved somewhat unsteadily, Flor thought, out of the room.

Mary came forward from her seat she had occupied at the other end of the apartment. Mary was a handsome girl, but something hard and bitter seemed changing the blue eyes and pretty features.

"Will you let me share your room for a night or two?" she asked.

Flor looked up surprised at this first intimation of confidence.

"It doesn't trouble me at all," she said, softly. "I am not afraid."

"But if I could see this—this appearance, whatever it is!"

"You could not, probably—no one could see it but me."

"How do you know that?"

Flor looked down, flushing again.

"I—think—I am one of those persons who see such things," she faltered, "in my mind—and—that—"

She could not deceive, and broke down.

"But you shall share my room," she added, a moment after. "I am glad you asked me; it proves that I am not disagreeable to you, as I thought at first I was."

"Oh, no indeed—not now. I did feel a very little jealous when poor Angy's child was put in your care—but—now—since—since Mr. Irvington is so very partial to you—I like you better."

"Then you make him over to me," said Flor, smiling.

"Oh, no—no!" Mary exclaimed with a shudder. "I would not inflict such a fearful fate on any one I knew—even on one I hated. But you are different from me. I did think at first you would be flattered with the idea that you might be mistress of Willoway, but if I can read your character, you have something like such a loathing for this man as I have. Yes, you are different from me—differently placed, I mean—Independent; you have nobody but yourself to please—you are not tied, hand and foot. Do you know I'm afraid that man would have made me his wife before now, if it had not been for Seymour Hurst? I believe John Irvington hates him."

Flor flushed and trembled, and made a faint pretence of picking something from the floor.

"Why do you remain here?" asked Flor, a moment after.

"How can I help myself? We have lost Eden Lodge—that was ours. Mr. Irvington got it, some way. We have no other home—my brother is kept constantly poor, paying some old debt, mother says—some debt of honour. He cannot marry, even, and is getting worn and old long before his time. I do think John Irvington broke off a match between him and a wealthy girl, out of sheer malice. I often wonder if some fiend possesses him."

"My dear, I am remarkably obliged to you," said a low voice near them.

Mary turned with a faint scream. John Irvington stood by the door, hat in hand. He bowed courteously, waved his hat once, slightly, and was gone.

"How much do you think he heard?" gasped Mary, catching at Flor's hands.

"He cannot have heard all you said," replied Flor, soothingly. "I saw him when he entered, though not in time to warn you."

"But I shall suffer for it," Mary murmured, and hurried away at the call of her mother's bell.

Flor still sat there—her heart was singing, though her lips were mute—even while she felt pity for those unfortunate inmates of Willoway. She saw John Irvington drive by—yesterday he had taken her and the little child; she saw—and now her heart beat faster—Seymour Hurst walking rapidly up the long, level road.

He came in, looked around, and seemed relieved to find her alone.

"Flor," he said, walking straight towards her, "I have come to ask you a question. For that piece of impertinence I was guilty of at Hunter's I have obtained your forgiveness, I feel sure, and now, Flor, I want you—will you be my wife? Words would fail me to tell my appreciation of your noble character. Flor, can you love me?"

He had bent over her till one hand rested on her own, trembling it was, and then he sank down farther, till he was almost on his knees, it seemed. She turned her face towards him after a moment. He needed not the answer of the lips; her eyes told him.

"Thank Heaven! my darling!" he said; and there were tears in the dark, manly eyes. "I could not bear to see you here, under the influence of that evil man; I could not bear to feel that the shadow of this place rested on you, my darling. I cannot let you stay here—Mary and I—"

"But I must stay here, Seymour."

"Must!"

He let her hand fall.

"It is my home—my rightful home," she cried, in a low, sobbing voice, "bought with my dear father's money."

He moved back still farther, doubting the evidence of his senses—looked at her with a kind of fright dilating his eyes.

"Listen to me a moment, my good, kind friend. Sit down—don't look at me so—hear me, and then judge if I am crazed," said Flor, rapidly, sustaining the even tenor of her voice with difficulty. "Long ago, when I was a little child, a poor little beggar I took an oath—it seemed a terrible thing to me then—but I kept it sacredly until this hour."

"This man, John Hubert Irvington, is my foster-brother. My father took him from the very depths of poverty, because his beauty pleased him, and gave me, a baby, to him for a sister. I think as we grew up together, my father hardly knew the difference between us. He was a gentle, confiding man, who married very late in life."

"When I was six, and John Hubert perhaps nineteen or twenty, my father took us abroad—I should have said my mother died when I was born. We stayed away a year. Coming home, the vessel, a large merchant ship, was wrecked."

"My father was instantly killed. I remember now that my foster-brother threw me off rudely, while I was clinging to him, in order that he might get into one of the boats with a little green box in his hand. There was a terrible confusion. I was caught up by a tall old man, one of the steerage passengers, who had often played the violin to amuse me. Then there was a terrible blank, except that I saw Hubert once, when I was just being swallowed up by the great waves—and I remember nothing more."

"We were picked up, however, but the fright and the cold made the old fiddler ill. His eyes were inflamed, and he lost the sight of them shortly after."

"Three or four years passed—I was deserted—thrown among outcasts. Nobody believed my story. The miserable creatures about me laughed at me, and called me a ragged princess. One night I saw Hubert Irvington. Oh, how rapturously happy I was at that moment! All my troubles were over, I thought. I let fall my poor old tambourine; I ran, flew towards him, and hung on him. No doubt I acted like a crazy child—but I was almost crazed with joy. He shook me off. Then he affected to be amused, and let me into his room—the same one I went into with you."

Flor paused for a moment, grew pale, her lips trembled.

"There—the man was a coward. Oh, how brutally he treated me! Oh, by what names he called me! I wondered how he could abuse a poor, helpless little child. He even threatened me with a whip; he even dared to threaten me with the gall. When I left him I had no more faith in man. Then I said, with passion, that I had done with all trying for evermore. I would never, never speak of my past life to any living mortal again. I thought my heart was broken, and—and you see now why all these things have troubled me so."

Seymour Hurst stood before her, very pale and silent, so pale that in the waning light he looked corpse-like.

"It is well he is not here," at last he cried, in his old way, between shut teeth. "Thank Heaven, I did not know this before—I asked that question."

"And I say thank Heaven, too!" murmured Flor.

"You see now it is better for me not leave this house just at this time. I know my father would not be unjust to his only child. I know that though he trusted so in the boy he rescued from degradation, that in the event of my death he might have left him his fortune, still he could not put forth the shadow of a claim if I were to prove this thing against him. And I will. His base lips shall perjure himself. He is all wicked—all through—and Heaven has put him in my hands. Now are you satisfied if I stay?"

"Satisfied with whatever you do, my beloved. But this is all so utterly unexpected to me that I hardly know how to act."

CHAPTER XII.

"No more of the old visitation, I hope, Miss Hart?" (that was the name Flor went by in this family) said John Irvington one morning, some days afterward.

"On the contrary, it has become a permanent infiction," said Flor.

"My dear young lady, I am really very sorry," said John Irvington, whose senses this girl had completely enthralled. "I would do anything in the world to rid you of such an annoyance, short of making up my mind to part with you, if it becomes intolerable and you wished it."

Flor saw that he trembled.

"In fact, Miss Hart, I was on the point of—pardon my bluntness, but I love you—even in this short time—love you to distraction. I cannot live—"

"Mr. Irvington," said Flor, calmly, "you must not talk in that way; indeed you would not if you knew of what that old man has accused you."

"Accused me!"

"He said only last night, that once there was a little child committed to your care, and that you basely deserted it. That afterwards that child was thrown in your way, and prayed to you for mercy and protection, but you answered with taunts and threat. Mr. Irvington, if you ever did such a thing as that, don't talk of love to me."

"It is false—it is all false," cried John Irvington, in a shaken voice, "the shadow—"

"John Herbert Irvington," said Flor, suddenly rising and enthralled the man with the power of her angry eyes, "it is not false. You did desert that child—you did afterwards spurn and insult her; Heaven help you, John Irvington—for I am that child, and I will bring judgment into this guilty household. Herbert Irvington was my father—my dear old father—and in the person of his child that father denounces you for perfidy and a broken trust."

She did not mean to do this; she did not dream but that he would hold his own, and not shake and cower before her—she did not dream of the madness of his love.

He staggered back, gave one great cry, and fell like a corpse at her feet.

All the passion went out of Flor's heart at this sight; something of her old, sisterly tenderness came back, even over the miserable and prostrate form.

The household was roused, the servants came up, Mrs. and Mary Collins hurried forward, agitated and trembling.

He was removed to his own rooms upstairs, doctors sent for, remedies applied, but for a long time all skill seemed vain to restore him. Day after day, for weeks, that answer came, "no better," until he seemed, at the expiration of thirty days, to be slowly mending.

One night he was unusually restless. His nurse, a light sleeper, occupied the chamber next to his, or rather a large recess divided from the room by a curtain. It was very still there, and John Irvington rose up in bed gazing cautiously around him. Hollow-eyed and gaunt, he looked little like the handsome man of a year ago. Rising, he contrived to throw on his dressing-gown, though his hands shook as with palsy, and finding his way to a secret corner, he took from it a small green box, and placed it upon the table. All this was done so cautiously that one on the watch might have taken him for a criminal, about to commit some secret but desperate deed. Frequently he looked round, suspicious, it seemed, of the very shadows that lay long and gaunt like himself across the floor, and over the walls and ceiling. Nobody stirred, however; nothing was heard save the subdued rustle of his motions, or the crackle of paper, as his wide sleeve swept across it. He drew the shaded lamp nearer, and with a small key unlocked the box. It was filled with papers, some sealed, some tied with narrow red tape or coloured ribbon. Of these he laid two or three aside, putting the rest back in the box.

Then he sat back a moment, pausing to think; then detached the shade from the lamp, lifted one of the parcels, a thin, yellowish document, carefully labelled—held it with his shaking hand so near the light that it turned and curled at the edges. Apparently he had not the nerve, however, to prosecute his design, for his hand fell helplessly upon the table, and his head fell forward, like that of a man half in despair. Again and again he seemed to renew his efforts, again and again as the paper quivered at the near, hot breath of the flame, he faltered, and at last threw it down upon the table, shaking his head helplessly.

Then he drew forth a smaller document. Looking over his shoulder, one might have seen the forged document of Harry Collins.

That he also laid upon the table beside the other, and placed before him a quire of paper which he lifted from the drawer under his hand.

"Curse this weakness!" he muttered, audibly, "it shall not overcome me. To think!" he groaned, "that I should love that girl so and find in her—Curses on my fate! Perhaps if I really did the right thing now—she might—yes, such things have been," he continued, soliloquizing in half-broken sentences as he lifted the pen. "I could excuse myself too; I might convince her that I considered her an impostor—I was younger then, thoughtless, heedless, foolish. But where are her proofs? Yet what need is there of proofs—what need was there ever?"

Then he began to write. He called her his sister, implored her forgiveness for the past, told her that he was now convinced, though he had doubted the child in rage and dirt; implored her to overlook his cowardly conduct, to take pity on the man whose soul she had subdued, and whose course she had turned from evil—wrote on till the beaded perspiration rolled from off his white forehead and his hands trembled so that the words were illegible.

"Weak, weak, weak!" he muttered; "I am overdoing." And the pen dropped from his helpless fingers. "So weak!" he murmured, pitifully, letting his head sink forward upon one arm, while the other fell powerless against his side.

When the valet came in in the morning, Irvington had not changed his position; the papers still lay

scattered about, the light burnt low and smoky; the room was shadowless, and yet overshadowed by an awful, silent presence.

The valet went forward hastily, touched the sleeper, started, drew nearer, looked into the half-closed eyes, noted the marble whiteness of every feature, and rang the bell in frantic haste, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Help! help! the master is dead!"

He was dead. Seymour Hurst came over as soon as he heard the news. The papers were left as they stood till after the inquest and the funeral, then Flor Irvington was acknowledged mistress of Willoway. For the first time Seymour Hurst knew of Harry's only lapse from virtue, but he quietly burned the paper, and the culprit was free. He told no one, not even Flor, when she became his wife. It was her wish to give back Eden Lodge into the possession of the Collinses, and the old lady wept like a child when the deed was placed in her hands.

And now Flor became the benefactor of the poor and miserable whom she had known in the days of her adversity. The old grandpa was happy in his seclusion. Harry Collins threw off the terrible load of care that had so long cursed him, and Mary became the wife of the man she loved. At last came to Flor the most surprising news of all, in the shape of a letter from Mrs. Walters.

"It was my own sister, dear Flor, whom your papa married. There was a coolness in the family consequent on my giving my hand to a poor man, who had his fortune to make, and your father being a great student, and adverse to all society save that of his child, and I living in a distant city, we seldom met after your mother's death. When I read of that fearful wreck, and that only your father's foster-son was saved, and that he inherited the property, I did not dream that you, my poor child, had gone through so frightful an experience. Why did you not tell me your story."

"I could not tell why I loved you so strangely, but now I know. Success and happiness attend you, darling. Sometimes I half guessed at the truth; do you remember when I detected a likeness between you and my own little Flor?"

The child of so unfortunate a union, Angy's poor little deformed daughter, found a haven in the almost parental love of both Flor and Seymour. Willoway was haunted no longer by evil, but by everything bright and beautiful.

THE END.

A TREE THAT KEEPS A STANDING ARMY.

AMONG the varied means of defence developed by plants in their ceaseless struggle for existence, there is perhaps none more wonderful or effective than that of a species of acacia which abounds on the dry savannahs of Central America. It is called the bull's horn thorn, from the strong curved thorns, like bulls' horns, set in pairs all over the trunk and branches. These no doubt help to protect the tree from the attacks of browsing animals; but it has more dangerous enemies in the leaf-cutting ants and other insects. Against these the tree maintains a numerous standing army, for which it provides snug houses stored with food, nectar to drink, and abundance of luscious fruit for dessert.

When first developed, the thorns are soft and filled with a sweetish pulp, much relished by a species of small springing ants, never found except on these trees. Making a hole near the point of one of each pair of thorns, these ants eat out the interior, then burrow through the thin partition at the base into the other thorn, and treat it in the same manner. The hollow shells thus formed make admirable dwellings, none of which are left untenanted, as any one may discover by disturbing the plant, when the little warriors swarm out in force and attack the aggressor with jaws and stings.

The leaves of the plant are two-winged, and at the base of each pair of leaflets, on the mid-rib, is a gland which, when the leaf is young, secretes a honey-like liquid, of which the ants are very fond. This ensures their constant presence on the young leaves, and their most zealous service is driving off other insects.

A still more wonderful provision of solid food is made for a similar purpose. At the end of each of the small divisions of the compound leaflet there grows a small fruit-like body, which, under the microscope, looks like a golden pear. When the leaf first unfolds, the little pears are not quite ripe, and the ants are continually employed going from one to another to see how they come on. As these fruit-like bodies—which appear to have no other use than as ant food—do not ripen all at once, the ants are kept about the young leaves for a considerable time. When an ant finds one sufficiently advanced, it bites the point of attachment, then, bending down the prize, breaks it off and bears it away in triumph to the nest.

These ants, a species of *pseudomyrma*, are found,

as already noticed, only on these trees; and that the trees really keep them as a body-guard seems evident from the fact that, when planted in localities where their little protectors do not exist, they are speedily defoliated by leaf-cutters, which let them severely alone on the savannah, while their honey glands and golden pears offer no attractions to the ants of the forest.

Apparently both *acacias* and *pseudomyrmas* have been mutually modified in the course of time until they are now quite dependent on each other for support and protection.

SCIENCE.

TO GIVE IRON A TEMPER FOR CUTTING PORPHYRY.—Make the iron red hot, and plunge it into water distilled from nettles, acanthus, and pilosella, or else in the juice pounded out from these plants.

ASCENT OF SAP IN THE BARK OF TREES.—M. Faivre has recently performed a series of experiments on the mulberry, hazel-nut, and cherry laurel, which he considers goes far to prove the fact that the substances which supply the food of plants have an ascending motion in the bark. For this purpose, he made perfect or imperfect annular incisions through the bark, or detached pieces of the bark, to which buds were attached, or removed entire cylinders of bark from the trunk. The result of the experiments was that the buds always continued to develop when the communication remained uninterrupted with the lower portion of the trunk; while when this communication was completely destroyed, the buds invariably withered away. If the bud was separated by a perfect annular incision, it withered the more slowly the greater its distance from the incision; and in these cases the starch disappeared entirely from the portions of the wood above the incision between it and the bud. When entire cylinders of bark with buds on them were removed, the buds continued to develop, and even produced branches bearing leaves.

TRANSPARENT PARAFFIN.—The paraffin of commerce is a colourless, translucent substance, perfectly inodorous and tasteless. It floats on water, and has a density of about 0.870, and melts at about 113 deg. to 140 deg. Fahr., forming a colourless oil which, on cooling, again solidifies into a crystalline mass. It boils at about 698 deg., and volatilizes without decomposition. Paraffin does not absorb oxygen from the air, and is only slowly attacked by sulphuric acid, even at the boiling point of water. It is not at all attacked by dilute nitric acid, and only by the strong acid after prolonged boiling. In fact, chlorine or any part of our most energetic chemicals but slowly acts upon this curious substance, which may be considered to be as neutral to the general run of chemicals as our glass vessels. Lately it has been discovered that if paraffin be heated for some considerable time in a tube sealed up, the result is a more fusible paraffin, exactly similar in its apparent chemical composition, but much more soft and fusible—that, in fact, if the heat be continued for a considerable time, the paraffin being still under pressure, we obtain ultimately a perfectly transparent liquid paraffin.

IMPROVEMENT IN TREATING PHOTO-NEGATIVES.—When, by means of a camel hair brush or otherwise, iodine is applied to the image, the atoms of metallic silver which formed the picture are acted upon by the iodine, and are converted into iodide of silver. Now, as the metallic silver is not soluble in a weak solution of cyanide of potassium, but as iodide of silver is soluble, it follows that the application of this menstruum will instantly convert into clear glass every portion of a negative that has been touched by the tincture of iodine. Its use, then, will be obvious. Everything in a negative not desirable to be retained can be completely removed—a tree, a house, a background, a restless baby, or any other objectionable member of a group. Iodine dissolves freely in alcohol, ether, chloroform, sulphide of carbon, petroleum, and in solutions of the iodides. It is the latter of these that we recommend as a solvent when the solution is to be employed in acting upon a negative. Drop a crystal of iodine into a little water, and no visible change takes place, the water remaining clear as before; but on adding a crystal of iodide of potassium, it will be found that, as soon as the latter has reached the bottom of the vessel, the iodine immediately becomes affected and dissolves readily, and the solution becomes an intensely deep red colour. We find that if the iodine solution be thickened by the addition of a small quantity of mucilage of gum arabic, say a little more in proportion than is contained in common writing ink, all tendency to spread is destroyed. The solution may be applied by means of a delicate hair pencil, and in the most minute specks, lines, or stipples; and, after the clearing up application of the cyanide, these specks and touches will be found to be clear and sharply defined, showing that no extension has taken place.



[STARTLING NEWS.]

MY AUNT'S CODICIL.

"Yes," I replied to the shopkeeper, "I desire an inscription, and a somewhat long one."

And I stood turning the heavy seal-ring which I had selected for a gift to my husband with something like embarrassment.

The inscription I had chosen seemed in a manner a betrayal of my secret history.

"We can probably manage a dozen words, madam," the jeweller remarked, in a business-like way, taking in the dimensions of the ring.

"This was what I had selected," I said.

And I took from my pocket-book a slip of paper on which I had written this text:

"To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much."

And now should you like to know why I wished this particular inscription within my husband's ring? I shall have to tell you my whole story to make it clear.

I was twenty years old when this story of mine begins—all of it which has colour and form. I had been brought up by an aunt, a woman of strong and yet narrow views, somewhat parsimonious, and, I think now, hardly conscious of how hard and unsympathetic she was towards me as a child. She was even worse than hard, she was capricious, and one exhibition of this trait in her character outlasted even her life and followed me when she was no more.

Thinking backward towards a starting-point for my history, it seems to me to hinge upon that afternoon when I closed the sitting-room door so cautiously, and, reached my drab shawl and little silk hood from their nail in the passage, slipped noiselessly from the house and down the garden path, with a longing to be alone, a stealthy fear of being followed.

So long used to quiet, methodical ways, I was upset by the sudden invasion of friendly faces and voices

which the most important event of my life had recently necessitated. This event was Aunt Cambreling's death.

It was a windy, leaden afternoon. The uncut stalks and frost-bitten vines rattled mournfully as I walked down the desolate garden path. I remember too how the bare branches of the cherry trees creaked and awayed in the sighs of the autumn wind.

At the foot of the garden there was a pile of boards. I sat down upon them, and, drawing my shawl about me, looked, with strange sensations, at the house which had been my home almost as long as I could recollect.

There it stood, square, comfortable, substantial. The blinds were closed, the curtains lowered, and a length of black crape fluttered from the knocker. But it was not these things alone which gave the unfamiliar look, and caused me to struggle, as it were, to comprehend the change. It was the fact that Aunt Cambreling lay within, dead! And death means absence. She would be carried forth to-morrow, and henceforth be absent from this earthly habitation for ever more.

This was what I struggled to comprehend. It was so difficult to dissociate her from her house. She was one of those people who are felt everywhere. Vigilant, sharp, persistent, she pervaded every room with her oversight.

I was a timid child, and to such a one there is keen pleasure in harmless little concealments. I remember my numerous attempts to possess something in secret; a slip of geranium in a cracked teacup, a heap of moss and shells, a bit of poetry—anything that my imagination could colour and invest with the idea of absolute possession. But Aunt Cambreling always unearthed my treasures. She never charged me with their ownership. I could not have confessed it if she had. I had to stand by mute, and see them swept away as rubbish, time and again.

So by degrees I gave up having any private, per-

sonal interests, and became a sort of machine in a glass case, every throb visible to Aunt Cambreling's eye. And now she was gone. The keen eye and strong will would be over me no more. I who had been so completely controlled was now as completely free. The house wherein I might not have altered the position of a book upon the shelf or a picture on the wall, was mine without condition, to order as I chose. The reaction was violent. With singular sensations I sat and thought about it all.

My aunt's death had been caused by paralysis. From her first attack she lost control of her faculties. There was no opportunity for "setting her house in order," but neither was there any occasion. She left her will duly attested, in which she bequeathed her property to her "brother's daughter, Ednah Lang, unconditionally, but with the expectation that she will feel in duty bound to consider, when occasion serves, my late husband's nephew and namesake, Rolf Cambreling, whose present whereabouts are to the testator unknown." I was Ednah Lang, and this singular clause expressed in a codicil, was evidently the result of conflicting motives in my aunt's mind.

Absorbed in my thoughts, I was startled by approaching footsteps, and turned to find Dr. Hollis coming towards me.

"I saw you sitting here alone, Ednah, and wondered if you were lonesome," he said, rather apologetically.

"No, I was rather glad of the quiet. Still I do not mind your coming."

"I wish you had a more positive feeling about me. I wish I were of sufficient use for you to be glad when I come."

I was silent.

"Ednah, I long to be your friend, because I see how important some safe friendship is to you. You are young, pretty, rich, and now independent."

"And it is sad to think what may become of me," I said, as he paused, perceiving an ironical smile on my lips.

"I am not sure that it is," he returned, with a sigh.

"Why, Doctor Hollis, I don't think I shall change at all. I shall go on quilting bedquilts and making preserves all my future, as I have done through all my past."

"No, you will not, Ednah."

"Well, what rocks do you expect I am going to wreck upon?"

"I hope not upon any. I have come here this afternoon to warn you what may be the occasion of your first mistake."

I looked at him without speaking, wondering to myself at the change which had come between us. Hitherto it was I who had been grateful and shy. Now it was my lover.

For Doctor Hollis was my lover, in a tacit sort of way. He was hardly a girl's ideal in looks—short and thickset, with a ruddy chestnut beard and square, firm mouth, looking older than he should at thirty; looking, indeed, rather weather-beaten and worn by his hard country ride, not by any means a girl's ideal, and yet possessing a personal meekness in his soft, rich voice and well-shaped, kindly hand.

The time came when I thought my liking for Doctor Hollis at this time was the result of circumstances. He was the only marriageable man I knew. To him I had been indebted for the slight sentimental excitements for which the heart is so hungry at twenty. It was him alone from whom I ever received the gift of a flower, the loan of a book. And when he accepted Aunt Cambreling's grim and rare invitation to stop to tea the occasion was one of un-mixed pleasure to me.

But to-day I sat talking to Doctor Hollis with a new sense of holding unlimited power over him, with a surprised interest in the pitying deference he showed me.

"Of my first mistake?" I wondered what he meant.

"There is a codicil to your aunt's will, Ednah, relating to her husband's nephew; a very indefinite clause, is it not?"

"Very. She says she expects me to feel 'in duty bound' to 'consider' him."

"Of course you have formed no plan as to how you will carry out the terms of the will?"

"None whatever."

"A good deal will depend on the impression this person makes upon you?"

"Well," I hesitated, "I suppose I shall try to do my duty."

"That is, accord him help according to his need?"

"Help? Why, do you suppose anything ails him? that he is blind or lame or dissipated, or anything of that sort?"

"He is neither blind nor lame, Ednah; I have just seen him. He has arrived to be present at the funeral to-morrow. He is at the hotel."

"Is it possible? And I suppose he will think I ought to share and share alike with him. Well,

there is enough for both. I don't care much about money."

"Would you give him the half, and so get rid of him?"

"Get rid of him?" I repeated. "Then something does all him?"

"I think nothing 'ails' him, Ednah, at least externally. He is a handsome, prosperous-looking young man."

"And that," I said, slyly, "is a good reason, you think, for getting rid of him?"

"Ednah, I can't help feeling troubled at the peculiar relation in which you will stand towards this stranger. I think of your happiness alone, Heaven knows. I love you so well that I could give you up to secure it. But I cannot see you, perhaps, the dupe of this man's fascinations."

"He is fascinating then? How strange that a fascinating man should have fallen to my tender mercies!"

"Look at it seriously, please, Ednah. If he is just and honourable, there will be no occasion for my warning. He will take no advantage of you. If he is needy and unscrupulous, and you are incautious—"

I put my hands up in deprecation.

"I shall be dignified myself toward Mr. Rolf Cambreling. You need not anticipate a single jealous squam."

"Am I behaving like a Blue Beard? I am trying with all my heart to act as a friend only might act, if you had one both tender and true."

"You are my dearest friend, and tender and true both," I said, touched by the pathos in his voice.

"And you do nothing hasty, dear?"

"Nothing without consulting you."

His eyes brightened.

"I am satisfied. And now I cannot let you sit here any longer; you will take cold."

I was indeed shivering. I rose and returned towards the house, while Dr. Hollis wended his way across the orchard to the road.

Some ones lighting the lamps in the kitchen as I went in. The tea-table was being laid in the room beyond. I felt thankful for the sense of warmth and cheer.

I was fastening my crape collar with a little jet pin, looking at myself wondering, in my new suit of deep mourning the following morning, when they came to tell me that Mr. Cambreling had come.

"You and he will be chief mourners, you know, Ednah. Isn't it queer that he should come? Where had you better see him?" were the remarks accompanying the announcement.

I was just going to the parlour where my aunt now lay.

"Ask him to come there, please," I said. And I went and stood beside the open coffin, as though the dead woman could still protect and direct me.

Mr. Cambreling came to meet me with a graceful reverence.

He was a middle-aged man—a handsome, accomplished man of the world, as I knew later; the creation of a dream, as it seemed, to me then. He stood holding my hand.

"Sometimes, Miss Lang, bright and beautiful things grow out of what is painful and dark. So I count this meeting with you," he said.

I bowed in silence.

"It is long years since I saw our aunt. Her face, though, shows but little change."

"She was not changeable—there was little, I mean, to change her, in her mode of life," I answered, awkwardly.

Mr. Cambreling was silent a moment, looking tenderly at the dead.

"I wish," he said, "that I might recall the events which caused her to change in her feelings towards me."

"You knew her, then?" I inquired.

"Yes, I knew her, and loved her. But I was unfortunate enough to displease her. She could not forgive me. I feel the loss of her affection to be more endurable to-day finding you the object upon which she expended the favour which I forfeited."

He appeared much moved.

And I answered:

"I do not think that you wholly forfeited my aunt's favour, Mr. Cambreling, since she leaves a message which affects you in her will."

"No message could be so precious as her forgiveness," he said, with affected indifference as to the nature of the one I referred to.

"I think it includes that," and I repeated the words of the codicil.

"She has dealt kindly with me, indeed," was his reply, "because, Miss Lang, she seems to bequeath us to each other's consideration."

And something in his look gave me a consciousness of youth and womanhood and power which had never dawned in my breast before.

The funeral was over; the ripple of excitement was at an end, and I was alone once more, going on mechanically with the routine life to which I had been accustomed.

Mr. Cambreling returned to London without any arrangement being effected as to how I should carry out the terms of the will. Indeed, he would not permit me to broach the subject. But he asked permission to write to me, and as often as once a week a long letter came, full of entertainment and subtle flattery, and even instruction. In my dull life it would be hard to tell how much these letters were to me.

At length, in one letter, came some practical hints. It was near quarter-day. I would have to attend to collecting what was due me, to paying bills and reinvesting my balances. I think but for Doctor Hollis I should have written back to Mr. Cambreling, praying him to attend to these things for me. As it was, I made a slight cold my excuse for asking the doctor to come and see me, immediately upon the receipt of this letter.

"So Mr. Cambreling writes to you, Ednah?" was his first remark, upon hearing my communication.

I blushed inadvertently.

"Sometimes. And, as you see now, on business."

"He perhaps intends to hint at a settlement towards himself."

"He appears to be in circumstances where the little pittance that he can expect from Aunt Cambreling's estate is of small consequence to him."

"Appearance is not always reality. And the half of your aunt's estate is no pittance. I wish you were not so rich, Ednah."

"You are not very generous. Why?"

"Because then I should say, 'If you can trust me, marry me.'"

"A fortune does not often stand in the way of an offer of marriage," I laughed.

"It will always stand in my way, Ednah. You will have to give yourself to me if you are ever mine. I cannot ask for you."

"Then you do not want me very much," I smiled.

"Your heart knows whether I do or not."

I dared not look in his eyes, knowing I should have to answer their pleading if I did. And I could not answer it that day, for my own vision was filled with the face and form of Rolf Cambreling.

Dr. Hollis came back to the practical advice he had for me; the council of a responsible lawyer the appointment of a business agent.

"And now, Ednah, write to Mr. Cambreling; desire him to name two trusted friends, while you appoint the third, and let them meet in council, and decide upon the settlement you should make upon Mr. Cambreling."

"That is a wise thought," I answered. "And you shall be my member of the council."

"No; it would be better to choose a less interested representative."

In the settlement of the estate, it was found that my aunt had been worth far more than was surmised. I had been brought up to know so little of luxury and indulgence that I scarcely appreciated the fact that I was an heiress.

I wrote Mr. Cambreling, according to Dr. Hollis's advice, but was hardly yet expecting an answer when, returning one afternoon from a wintry walk, I found him occupying a seat before my sitting-room fire.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," I said, cordially, extending my hand to his guest.

He looked at me with penetration.

"You are using a mere set phrase, Ednah, of course?" he inquired, with rather more familiarity than I was prepared for.

"Why so, Mr. Cambreling? I am very glad to see you."

"Surely, though, if you had the slightest liking or respect for me, you would not have made the proposal contained in your last letter."

"Was not the proposal agreeable? Did it not seem fair to you?" I asked.

"It was far from agreeable. It seems to me that our aunt intended to leave the settlement of this business matter to ourselves; that she intended that your feelings, not your calculations, should be the motive power. She left my interests with you, not with two or three sharp men."

Rolf Cambreling stood before me, dangerously handsome, a slight sadness in his tone, a faint reproach in his expressive eyes, as he uttered these words.

That there was some reason in them, I felt.

"I only desire to reach some definite plan for action, Mr. Cambreling," I said.

"Can't you call me Rolf, Ednah?" he asked. "Are we not near enough for that simple freedom?"

"As you like," I said.

It was not much of a point to yield.

"With that for a beginning, with the feeling that

we are not inimical strangers, but possess somewhat in common, I think it will not be hard to decide what you are 'in duty bound' to do for me, by your aunt's will."

"If you have any conception of Aunt Cambreling's wishes, if anything in your circumstances, unknown to me, points out a way by which I may carry out the spirit of her intentions, pray let me know them," I remarked.

"Ednah"—my visitor paused, his expressive eyes fixed fully upon my face—"I believe that Aunt Cambreling expected that you would marry me."

I started involuntarily.

"We are strangers, or nearly so," I stammered.

He drew his chair closer to mine, resting his hand upon it and leaning towards me.

"You certainly are no stranger to me, after the lovely, ingenuous letters which have made me so happy during these past three months. And if I have not equally revealed myself to you, Ednah, it is because many sorrows have darkened the windows of my heart, and distrust and disappointment have forced me to rely on myself alone. But even if we were strangers, we need not for ever remain so. Let me tell you something of myself and my plans to-night?"

I rang the bell for lights, and ordered supper. A driving storm precluded all chance of visitors, and during the long evening I listened to Rolf Cambreling's history. I need not pause here to relate how it moved and excited me.

He had endeavoured, as he told me, to live by literature—sometimes successful and prosperous, sometimes defeated and impoverished. Just now he had put all that he possessed into a new magazine, to which he regularly contributed. When it should succeed it would repay him tenfold; at present it was all uncertainty. At the end of the evening he said:

"Not to-night, but some time, Ednah, I will ask you whether a man with aims and tastes like mine, and with such poor achievements as mine have been, is one to whom you might entrust your happiness."

I was silent. There was something agreeable in Rolf Cambreling's wooing, if no more. It contrasted pleasantly, as did his handsome face and pliant manner, with Dr. Hollis weather-beaten and worn. I said to myself that I should be the judge of what Mr. Cambreling should have by my aunt's codicil, and no council of stupid men. He said good-night and good-bye in one, when that evening ended. But the following morning I sent him a cheque for two hundred pounds, accounting to no one for my disposal of the money.

"Will Mr. Cambreling accept the proposition you made him in regard to a council, Ednah?" Dr. Hollis inquired, some little time after this meeting.

"No; he prefers to leave the decision to me alone."

"Then he intends to deceive, and, if he can ruin, you."

"Those are strong words. I don't think you have any right to say them, anyway," I added archly, "I thought you would be glad to have me poor."

"For my own sake. But it is not of my own sake I am thinking, but of yours. I have feared of late that there were more barriers between us than your fortune creates."

"You are so ready at erecting barriers that I sometimes think the wish is father to the thought, Dr. Hollis."

His eyes rested upon me very tenderly.

"Heaven help me, Ednah Lang, for loving you so well."

"Do you love me as you used? You never show it now," I questioned, childishly.

His lip trembled.

"I would lay down my life for you. But I cannot let you trample on my self-respect."

"I have never tried to."

"Yes, Ednah, you have. You neither break nor acknowledge your engagement with me. At the same time you are receiving letters and visits from another man. Only one or two constructions can be applied to these attentions. Either Rolf Cambreling is your suitor, or he is seeking to obtain undue influence over you for the purpose of defrauding you."

I felt how unjust I was to both men in not declaring that Rolf was my suitor, at least by implication, and that my heart favoured his suit. Yet I was silent. I knew not which I loved best. I justified myself by remembering that Doctor Hollis professed no claim upon me; therefore, I said, he had none. And Mr. Cambreling had related his history, his prospects and circumstances to me, under an implied seal of secrecy. I continued to indulge myself in an uncertainty for which I was to pay a sharp penalty.

I supposed that many of Mr. Cambreling's subsequent visits were known to Doctor Hollis. He could come in by a train arriving at dusk, and leave again at midnight; we had thus, as it were, stolen interviews, and with my childish passion for concealment I enjoyed their clandestine character. Mr. Cambreling

seemed to understand the charm of the indefinite. He was always on the point of becoming my declared lover, but he never quite became so. My pride chafed a bit sometimes. I have not come up to his expectations, I said, in self-humility. Meanwhile he was educating me, as it were, up to his standard. He revealed a new world to me—a world of ideas. Most of these fascinated, though a few alarmed me. I can recall now how skillfully he managed this latter class of his views.

There was never much talk about money. Yet the result of his coming was invariably a cheque drawn in his favour, which my delicacy caused me to convey to him without comment.

I was now twenty-one, absolutely my own mistress. No one had either the interest or the power to hinder me in disposing of my money as I listed. I say no one had the interest, for such as Dr. Hollis felt he now declined to exhibit it. A barrier had indeed arisen between us.

I think there are women, and I know there are men, who can understand my frame of mind at this period. Of my two suitors I knew not which to choose. I was childish enough for flattery and novelty and fine looks to charm me, but I was womanly enough also to appreciate Doctor Hollis's unselfish patience and tenderness.

On one side, as it appeared to me, was a life, spurred, restless, alert and fascinating; on the other repose, confidence, happiness. I stood between the two, over-confident in my own security.

It was on a lovely summer morning that the crisis came.

I was out among my roses, when the rapid approach of Doctor Hollis's chaise attracted my attention.

He stopped at the gate. "Ednah, I must speak to you at once," he said, with agitation.

I blushed now to confess that my first thought was that some ill had befallen Mr. Cambreling. An ill had indeed befallen him, but not of the nature I surmised.

Doctor Hollis went on:

"Your bank account in London has been overdrawn. Do you know it?"

"No," I stammered, faintly.

"You have delegated no powers to—any one?"

"No," I said, more faintly still.

"Then your name has been forged?"

"Oh, who would have forged it?"

"Mr. Rolf Cambreling."

"Impossible!"

"Why do you say impossible?" asked the doctor, sharply. "Have you such guarantees of his probity?"

I could not tell Doctor Hollis that in my secret heart Rolf Cambreling's interests seemed identical with my own. I could not tell him so because the bond that existed between us was too vague to explain.

"He is a gentleman," I returned, hotly; "he would not defraud me."

"You are very positive, Ednah. What do you propose to do?"

"I will go to London at once."

"Not go yourself?"

"Yes. Nothing can be done without my seeing Mr. Cambreling."

Doctor Hollis's eyes were fastened upon me.

"Then there is some understanding between you. He has not bargained you without some justification."

"I do not know that you have any right to catechize me, Doctor Hollis."

"I do not know that I have," he returned, sadly, "nor to advise you either. But I must tell you, Ednah, that you will commit an impropriety in going off to seek Rolf Cambreling alone."

"I must see him. I confess that, being much interested in a scheme of his, I have advanced him money; perhaps from what I have said he inferred that I would help him through, and some emergency having arisen, he has used my name, knowing that he could explain all."

"A singular liberty; not pardonable, according to my views, even between man and wife."

He turned to go.

"Ednah," and he paused, "I had not meant to speak of my own feelings to-day. They are of no farther interest, I see, to you. And yet I must implore you, if you ever valued them, not to go to London."

"It is best for me to see Mr. Cambreling."

I could not have told why I thought it best. In my secret soul though I was saying:

"He is prepared now, having taken such a liberty, to ask me to become his wife."

And in that hour of infatuation I would have given him myself and all belonging to me, without condition.

Doctor Hollis was gone. I made my hasty preparations, and late that same afternoon I reached London.

Without delay I drove to the address to which my letters had been sent. Evidently it was his residence, not his place of business, a boarding-house, as I discovered on being let in. I was shown into a public parlour, where several people were lounging, and for the first time the difficulty and embarrassment of the situation in which I had placed myself came over me.

At length when I had waited a long half-hour, the six o'clock dinner-bell sounded, and I was left alone in the room.

Then the door opened, and a somewhat faded but still handsome woman entered furtively, and approached me.

"Miss Lang," she said, bitterly, "I think it is time that you should make my acquaintance. I am Mrs. Cambreling."

"It is Mr. Rolf Cambreling whom I wish to see," I replied, not by any means comprehending what she inferred.

"So I am aware," was the ironical reply. "I am fearful, my dear young lady, that you will never see Mr. Rolf Cambreling again."

I felt myself grow pale.

"I have business—business of great importance with him," I urged.

"Doubtless," said the lady, with a supercilious smile; "you are not the first whose business with Mr. Cambreling has had to wait. Don't look so shocked. Nothing would surprise you if, like me, you had had the privilege of being Mr. Cambreling's wife."

I did not echo her words, because my lips refused to move. I rose, however, scarcely knowing how I did it.

"Compose yourself, Miss Lang, before you leave," said my hostess. "I will remark that neither a lawyer nor a detective will do you any good to-night. Mr. Cambreling is far beyond your reach. It is somewhat indiscreet in me to come down to see you, I suppose, but I had some little feminine curiosity about you. I have gratified it, and will not detain you. If your property is not entirely appropriated, you may thank my jealousy. I was afraid of your becoming too much interested in my husband," and she swept me a courtesy, and left me standing in the middle of the floor.

I got back to the carriage, which was still waiting without; consulted my watch, and found that I was too late for the train. To remain alone and inactive seemed impossible. I telegraphed to Doctor Hollis: "Come at once. I need you," and in a few hours he was with me.

With floods of grief and shame I made my story as plain as I could. I think I kept back nothing.

Doctor Hollis seemed to attend only to those points which indicated how far Rolf Cambreling had imposed upon my credulity.

By well-considered frauds he had possessed himself of the greater part of my fortune, and, as his wife had informed me, was far beyond my reach with his ill-gotten gains.

Sadder and wiser indeed, I returned home. There still remained to me sufficient for the simple mode of life in which I had been brought up. The loss of money was as nothing compared with the humiliation and loss of trust in human nature which I endured.

But time is the great consoler, and by degrees the soreness wore away. And since I was not now too rich for Doctor Hollis to ask me to become his wife, he asked it. And I, with inward wonderment at my own delusions, and inward thanksgiving for my own escape, consented.

There was much for him to forgive, but he forgave freely.

For my part, when I consider the depth and riches of the love I bear him, I can think only of the words which I have had graven within my ring: "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much."

W. H. P.

OUR WEIGHTS.—Upon the average, boys at birth weigh a little more, and girls a little less, than six pounds and a-half. For the first twelve years the two sexes, says the *Medical Record*, continue nearly equal in weight, but beyond that time males acquire a decided preponderance. Thus, young men of twenty average about 143 lb. each, while the young women of twenty average 120 lb. Men reach their heaviest bulk at about thirty-five, when they average about 152 lb.; but women slowly increase in weight until fifty, when their average is about 123 lb. Taking men and women together, their weight at full growth averages about twenty times as heavy as they were on the first day of their existence. Men range from 108 to 229 lb., and women from 88 to 207 lb. The

actual weight of human nature, taking the average of ages and conditions—nobles, clergy, tinkers, tailors, maidens, boys, girls, and babies, all included—is very nearly 100 lb. These figures are given in avoirdupois weight; but the advocates for the superiority of women might make a nice point by introducing the rule that women be weighed by troy weight—like other jewels—and men by avoirdupois. The figures will then stand: Young men of twenty, 143 lb. each; young women of twenty, about 146 lb. each, and so on.

A NEW REMEDY FOR HYDROPHOBIA.

A NEW, simple, and, as it is stated, infallible remedy for hydrophobia has been recently published, and as its author is a physician (Dr. Buisson) it probably merits more attention than the numerous remedies which crop up perennially, like buttercups in a meadow. The terrible disease which apparently invariably follows sooner or later the bite of a mad dog is as seemingly fatal as the venomous fang of the cobra di capello, for it has defied alike the skill of the physician and the surgeon, and the materia medica has been ransacked in vain for a drug to counteract the effects of the virus upon the blood. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that every village barber and the gossips of the countryside have an abiding faith in that one of the hundred remedies which they have heard described as infallible by their ancestors, and the marvellous cures effected by them are never tired of repeating. Many of these so-called remedies are of the most ridiculous character, and we are afraid that a majority of those who read the description of Dr. Buisson's remedy will regard it as equally ridiculous. But the rationale of Dr. Buisson's method seems based on something more than its simplicity. It consists, in effect, of eliminating the poison, or, at least, rendering it inert, by putting the patient into a profuse perspiration. Thus his directions are, that when a person has been bitten by a mad dog he must, for seven successive days, take a vapour bath of 57 deg. to 63 deg. C. (134 deg. to 144 deg. Fahr.). This he calls the preventive remedy. When, however, the disease has declared itself, which we presume will in future happen only when the preventive remedy has been neglected, he states that it is sufficient to take one vapour bath in which the temperature is made to rise rapidly to 37 deg. C. (98 deg. Fahr.), and then slowly to 53 deg. C. (127 deg. Fahr.), the patient, keeping his room till the cure is complete. The simplest form of vapour-bath is quite as effectual as the most elaborate. A few red-hot bricks placed in a pail of water over which the patient sits on a cane-bottomed chair, a large blanket covering him in, from his shoulders down to the floor, is both simple and handy, and will answer the purpose admirably.

Dr. Buisson's remedy is the outcome of his own experience, for he is personally acquainted with the first stage of hydrophobia, and with the marvellous effects of the bath. It seems that he once attended a female patient in the last stage of the madness, and imprudently wiped his hands on a handkerchief impregnated with her saliva. A slight abrasion on one of his fingers warned him of his carelessness; but, confident in the powers of his bath, he merely washed the part with water, and believing, as he then did, that the malady would not declare itself till the fortieth day, he performed his usual routine of visits, etc. On the ninth day, however, he began to suffer the consequences of his neglect; for he felt a pain in his throat and a greater one in his eyes. His body seemed so light that he felt he could jump a prodigious height, or that, if thrown out of the window, he would be able to sustain himself in the air. Saliva kept forming in his mouth continuously; even a slight movement of the air inflicted pain upon him, and he was compelled to avoid the sight of brilliant objects. He had a desire to run and bite, not human beings, but animals and objects near him. He drank with difficulty, and observed that the sight of water distressed him more than the pain in his throat; whence he thinks that by shutting the eyes any one suffering from hydrophobia can always drink. The fits came on every five minutes, and thinking his course was then preservative, not curative, he took a bath, and found that when it had reached a temperature of 53 deg. C. (126 deg. Fahr.) the symptoms disappeared as if by magic, and never reappeared. Since then he has attended more than eighty persons bitten by mad animals, and has not lost a single case. In his own case this evidence is, of course, of the negative character; for there is no proof of an attack of rabies, but merely symptoms of it, which might have yielded to other remedies. Still, of the eighty cases mentioned it is not possible to assume that they were all of this character; and bearing in mind the number of deaths that do occur from the bites of mad animals, we must allow that a percentage of these

cases were bona fide cases of hydrophobia, and were consequently cured by the vapour bath. The effects of violent exercise and profuse perspiration in enabling the constitution to throw off the effect of poisons are well known, for instances are on record of fever patients and others being cured by the violent exercise they have taken during delirium. The effects of the bite of the tarantula are said to be overcome by dancing, and amongst the cases mentioned by Dr. Buisson is that of an American who, while some eight leagues (?) from home, was bitten by a rattlesnake, and, wishing to die in the bosom of his family, ran the greater part of the distance, and on getting to bed perspired profusely, and found himself cured. We do not, however, put much faith in these alleged "cures"; still, Dr. Buisson's remedy is so simple that there is no trouble in trying it; and if the result is not satisfactory to the patient, that is only what is to be expected from any of the other suggested remedies.

FACETIÆ.

"HISTORY."—Mrs. Malaprop: "Been to see the Booshan Czar, my dear? Not if I know it! Why, it was them as shot off my poor boy's leg out in the Chimera!"—Punch.

RATHER HARD.—Paterfamilias (who believes in the employment of women) writes to ask why young women should be kept out of the pulpit while there are so many old ones left in?—Punch.

TAKEN LITERALLY.

Lady Visitor: My dear, do you know if your mamma is engaged?

Little Girl of the Period: "Engaged? Bless you, why, she's married!"—Judy.

OUTRAGE.—The Rev. Ward Beecher has refused the offer of a six months' tour in Europe, all expenses paid, recently made to him by his congregation. How curious it is that some people will not take a hint.—Fun.

"PEOPLE may say what they will about country air being so good for 'em," said Mrs. Partington, "and how they sat upon it; for my part I shall always think it is owing to the wittles. Air may do for caniniles and other reptiles that live on it, but I know that men must have something more substantialler."

A GENTLEMAN at a musical party, where the lady was very particular not to have the concert of sweet sounds interrupted, was freezing under the performance of a long concerted piece, and seeing that the fire was going out, asked a friend, in a whisper, how he should stir the fire without interrupting the music. "Between the bars," replied the friend.

ELOPEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.—A Mr. Robbins of Falmouth who was about to leave for America proposed to take a keg of powder with him. Through some mistake the powder went off first. It took the roof of the house with it, and since the last report has not been heard of again. Need we add that the police are on its track?—Fun.

A WICKLOW convivial small tenant in want of a lemon was observed slicing a potato into his hot whisky toddy. "Why, what are you about?" inquired a friend. "It's punch I'm makin', my boy," quietly replied Pat. "But what are you slicing the potato into it for?" "To give it a flavour." "What! a potato flavour?" "Sure, and isn't a flavour a flavour, whether it's lemon or pitay?"

DEAR OLD SOUL.—"Now, then, madam, please look at this place on the wall," said a photographer to good old Aunt Elizabeth, when he had put her in position and the plate in the camera. The dear old lady looked hard at the designated spot from her seat, then got up and walked across the floor and minutely inspected it, then turning to the photographer, gently remarked, "I don't see anything there."

A MOMENTOUS QUESTION.—An old gentleman went one day with his gun to shoot partridges, accompanied by his son. Before they approached the ground where they expected to find the game, the gun was charged with a heavy load, and when at last the old gentleman discovered one of the birds, he took a rest and blazed away, expecting to see the game fall, of course; but not so did it happen, for the gun kicked with so much force as to knock him over. The old man got up, and while rubbing the sparks out of his eyes, inquired of his son: "Alphy, did I point the right end of the gun at the birds?"

UPS AND DOWNS.

The goings on of the Money Market are always very mysterious. The *Standard* the other day recorded a very curious fact thereon:—

The speech of Lord Derby on Monday has created an uncomfortable feeling in business circles by making unpleasant realities so plain. A fall at the Bourse arose in consequence.

This is similar to the case of the Irish labourer who,

when questioned about his accident at the hospital, said that he fell from the middle of the road into the first-floor window.—Fun.

A MAN was once attempting to steal a goose, but a dog raised an objection, and he retired. The next night, during a thunder shower, he attempted it again, and just as he was on the point of getting away with it, the lightning struck close by and the noise nearly frightened the poor fellow to death. Dropping the goose, he started away, muttering, "It seems to me there is a lot of fuss made about a common goose."

TIPS FOR TENDER CONSCIENCES.

1st. When you tell your servant to say that you "are not a tome," you merely request him to assert that you are not a book. If his assurances to this effect induce visitors to believe that you are "not at home," you are not answerable for the misunderstanding.

2nd. When you say to Mary Smith, "That song you sung was charming!" you really mean that it was so—when sung by Anne Other.

3rd. When you say to an unwelcome acquaintance who has been away, "My dear fellow, I am glad to see you're back!" you only make a statement equivalent to saying to him, "I am rejoiced to see your back."—Fun.

MODERNIZED.

HOME again, out of life's long battle,

By Brother Guy bidden, to see

Our homestead revised and corrected

From garret to cellar. Ah, me!

"A wondrous improvement," folks tell me;

"One scarcely would know it, in truth,"

I answer them "Yes," but I'm thinking

The while of the home of my youth.

I know the bay-window is charming,

Where sunshine may riot at will,

But the quaint little door it displaces

Behind it is glimmering still;

There still, in the sunshine of morning,

A mother speaks softly, "Good-bye,"

There still, in the afternoon shadow,

The school-boy comes back. Was it I?

I know the French roof is a fashion,

But, ah! there's a sorrowful pain

To miss the rough trail of the elm bough,

The song on the roof of the rain;

I miss the dark eaves-sheltered swallows,

I miss the sweet herb-scented air,

From dim outer chamber exhaling

Fresh tokens of housewifely care.

I miss the poor cracked little mirror

That held the glad face of my youth,

For this, with its polished reflections,

Still tells me a sorrowful truth.

I miss the old three-cornered cupboard,

With button ill-fitting, that tried

To bring to a sense of its duty

The door guarding dainties inside.

I know all the worth of a furnace,

Its comfort and warmth I admire,

Yet, home-sick, I long for the hearth-light,

The olden-time talks by the fire.

I nod an assent to all praises,

I whisper no censure to Guy;

But, alas! after all, there is something

Not modernized yet. Is it I? E. L.

GEMS.

MERIT is mostly discovered by accident, and rewarded by destiny.

GREAT places are great burdens, distinguished conditions in life exact great servitude.

A MAN can do without his own approbation in much society, but he must make great exertions to gain it when he lives alone.

THERE are two modes of establishing our reputation: to be praised by honest men, and to be abused by rogues. It is best, however, to secure the former, because it will be invariably accompanied by the latter. His censure is not only the greatest benefit a rogue can confer upon us, but it is also the only service that he will perform for nothing.

WE have no sympathy with the sluggish who imagine himself half-frozen to death as soon as the cold weather sets in. Stir yourself, and keep your blood moving. Exercise is an excellent fire. There is something unmanly in the spirit which shrinks from the warfare by which we obtain the mastery over the elements. Energy and activity convert the cold weather into a luxury.

Two marriages, rather remarkable by reason of the advanced age of the contracting parties, were cele-

brated at St. Peter's Church, Brighton, recently. In one instance the bridegroom was ninety-one, and the bride sixty-five; and in the other the bridegroom was seventy-seven, and the bride a few years younger.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LEMONS WHOLESOME.—When people feel the need of an acid, if they would let vinegar alone, and use lemons or apples, they would feel as well satisfied, and receive no injury. A suggestion may not come amiss as to a good plan when lemons are cheap in the market, to make a good lemon syrup. Press your hand on the lemon, and roll it back and forth briskly on the table to make it squeeze more easily; then press the juice into a bowl or tumbler—never into a tin; strain out all the seeds, as they give a bad taste. Remove all the pulps from the peels, and boil in water—a pint for a dozen pulps—to extract the acid. A few minutes' boiling is enough; then strain the water with the juice of the lemons; put a pound of white sugar to a pint of the juice; boil ten minutes, bottle it, and your lemonade is ready. Put a tablespoonful or two of this lemon syrup in a glass of water, and have a cooling, healthful drink.

STEWED BEEF STEAKS WITH OYSTERS.—Take some fine tender beefsteaks out from the sirloin. If they are taken from the round they should be beaten with a rolling pin to make them tender. Put them into a close stewpan, with barely sufficient water to prevent their burning, and set them over the fire to brown. When they are browned, add sufficient oyster-liquor to cook them, and some bits of fresh butter rolled in flour. Let them stew slowly for an hour, or till they are thoroughly done. Then add three or four dozen of fine large fresh oysters, in proportion to the quantity of meat, seasoning them well with nutmeg, a few blades of mace, and a little cayenne. Cover the pan, and simmer them till the oysters are well plumped, but not till they come to a boil. When all is properly cooked, transfer the whole to a deep dish, and send it to table hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Emperor of Russia has intimated his wish that he shall not be called Czar, a title which in Russia is considered obsolete.

INTELLIGENCE from Zurich states that the Empress Eugénie and the Prince Imperial intend visiting the family estate at Arenberg.

THE Czar slept on a camp bedstead which he brought with him. A magnificent bedstead prepared for him in Windsor Castle had to be removed.

SIR H. SELWYN IBRETON has undertaken to build at his own cost, in the Princess Mary's village, at Addlestone, a house to carry out the system of boarding out pauper children.

THERE is a report that the Queen has accepted the Emperor of Russia's invitation to St. Petersburg, though the exact date when it will take place is not stated.

A VERY magnificent carpet, in value about 320*l.*, manufactured expressly for Her Majesty, was laid in the grand drawing-room at Buckingham Palace, previously to its occupation by the Czar.

GREAT efforts are being made to improve cottage accommodation on the Prince of Wales's Sandringham estate. Some double houses have been erected at a cost of 300*l.*, and they are let at a rent of 4*l.* a-year each. They have separate gardens, and great attention has been paid to the bedroom accommodation.

NOVEL CURE FOR HYDROPHOBIA.—A correspondent writes: A leech applied to a wound caused by the bite from a rabid dog might be a preventive of hydrophobia, as it would suck the poison from the wound. It is just possible that it might do good, and I don't see that it would do any harm.

THE Grand Duke Alexis takes back to Russia a remembrance of his visit to London in the shape of an English bull-dog, which the Grand Duke was compelled to lead on board the "Derjava" himself, the Russian sailors not liking the appearance of the animal.

THE question of precedence which has arisen in respect to the Duchess of Edinburgh has been, we understand, settled in this way—the Grand Duchess will be styled either Her Imperial Royal Highness or Her Royal Imperial Highness, and will take rank next in order to the Princess of Wales.

THE KING OF THE JONES'S.—The richest man in the world is a Mr. Jones. He hails from Nevada, U.S., and is a senator, whose speech on the recent "Inflation" Bill caused a great sensation. His annual income is said to be 1,200,000*l.* He is the owner of the most productive mine known, a large silver mine, which gave him recently, as his share of the profits, 50,000*l.* a-month. This amount has been doubled by the discovery of a new vein.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ELISE.—Cut the ends off the hair occasionally and wash the head frequently.

THE THREE FRIENDS.—The handwritings are very much alike and are all good.

G. W.—The information your note professes to give is not couched in sufficiently exact and definite form.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.—Letters from the following have been duly received:—George C., Essex, P. P., R. H., Eliza W., and Emma N.

KATE.—Try to prevail on another friend to call at the house where your late friend resided, and ask for the information you desire to possess.

JESSIE F.—Just a few particulars about yourself. Your note is certainly not at all egotistical, for which reason, are indeed, it has turned out to be a bad shot.

HELEN.—The twenty-fifth of November 1855 fell on a Sunday. The writing is bold, some of the letters are elegantly formed, but on the whole the letter has a careless appearance.

MIRIA.—The better plan is to tell the doctor who, as you say, is now attending you. That is not a bad rule which enjoins us to keep nothing which is pertinent to the case concealed from our doctor or our lawyer.

S. J. E.—Ladies usually learn to swim at the sea-side, where suitable professional attendance can without difficulty be procured. Though the handwriting looks scratchy the letters are well formed. The pen and ink have not been well chosen.

LOVABLE NELL AND AFFECTIONATE FLO.—You have each written a very sprightly and witty letter. Surely with so much cheerfulness you must move in a large circle of acquaintance where beaux and sweethearts and future husbands are not wanting. From which it would seem to result that you are in a good position to help yourselves and need not aid from strangers.

MARY G.—The better opinion about the "cold week" in May seems to be that this sort of weather is caused by the breaking up of large icebergs in the Arctic regions which takes place at this season of the year. These masses of ice floating down from the Northern latitudes for a short time impart a chill to the wind and water round and about our sea-coast isle.

W. B.—The actual falling weight of the new steam hammer, just constructed at Woolwich Arsenal, is forty tons, and the pressure of the top steam is equal to fifty-one tons, so that with the full pressure on the hammer is able to strike a blow equivalent to a weight of ninety-one tons. It is said that at the present time this hammer is able to strike a harder blow than any other hammer in the world.

SUSANNAH H.—The terms of the resolution concerning the admission of women to the privileges of the University of London, which was recently submitted to the annual convocation of the University and upon a division carried by a majority of eighteen votes, are "that in the opinion of convocation it is desirable that women should be permitted to take degrees in the University of London."

A. B.—The future seat of government on the Gold Coast will be either Accra or Elmina. For government purposes only, Cape Coast Castle will be abandoned. From Accra to a place about forty miles inland there will be a railway and a telegraph. The troops of the garrisons will be natives officered by Europeans. The settlements of the West Coast of Africa and Lagos will be consolidated.

J. D.—The banqueting-room in Windsor Castle called St. George's Hall is 200 feet long, 34 feet broad and 32 feet high. The ceiling is decorated with the emblazoned arms of the Knights of St. George, and portraits of Kings and Queens cover the walls. At the east end of the Hall are twenty-four shields on which are emblazoned the arms of each Sovereign of the order from Edward III. to William IV.

CONDUCTUAL.—You are correct in your conjecture. There is such a sauce-powder, which dissolves in water in a few minutes. It is, we believe, a cheap, nutritious article and may be obtained of any oilman in penny packets. Mr. Sampson is the inventor of this novel item for the "cuisine" of the poorer classes who now may enjoy a really good and wholesome favouring for their frugal diet.

CHARMING EDITOR.—Thanks for your cheerful letter. The work therein referred to is too tedious and wearisome for such a merry lass as you appear to be; and because we would not help to bring a gloom or even a pensive look over your happy face, we refrain from complying with that especial wish. But by all means let us have the photograph in the manner you describe, if you will, and permit us to defer the "graphic" portion of the answer until we have been thus favoured. Secrets are terrible things, but, if unhappily they come to you

don't part with them if you can help it. You should not tell tales, you know. The letter might have been shown to papa, who would have told you that your pen slipped a dozen times or thereabouts.

L. S. B.—If it were the case that the object of the so-called address to the emblem of sublimity is too thinly veiled to permit of serious thought, we might have been tempted to use the verses in a way that would have illustrated the truth of the aphorism that from the sublime to the ridiculous there is but a step. Full of contradictions, they are trickily written apparently for the purpose of creating an illusory awe. But, like the children's old game, they have but to be fairly confronted in order that the nonsensical nature of the proceedings may be exposed. We observe the motto "Vigilantibus non dormientibus," and are obliged for the hint. Perhaps the present communication is a heavier and, in that way, sublimer attempt at jocularity than the former. But by so much the more does it hang fire. Better explosives, harmless of course, would be more acceptable, and in the conviction that you have heaps of ability to send them we hope that at a convenient time you will favour us once more.

J. J.—Delhi is a celebrated city in the northern part of Hindustan. It was the capital of the Mogul Empire and once famous for the splendour and number of its mosques and palatial residences. In common with other parts of India the city is now under the rule of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Often before the scene of various military exploits, Delhi is notorious for the siege it withstood against the loyal troops engaged in quelling the celebrated Indian Mutiny of 1857. At that time, when British power was sorely tried, all India looked to Delhi for a sign. The city was garrisoned by about 30,000 fighting mutineers, while the investing force, under the command of Sir Archdale Wilson did not exceed 7,000 men, who were at the commencement of the siege practically without siege artillery. From the middle of July to the beginning of September this small force held grimly on to its position before the city, harassed by sorties of the enemy and discomfited by the pernicious effects of the Indian climate. Vigorous proceedings, however, commenced on the 4th of September when the siege train arrived from the Punjab. On the 14th of the same month Delhi was assaulted and, after six days' street fighting, was occupied by the loyal troops on the 20th of September 1857.

KING AND QUEEN.

The happiest home I ever saw
Was where a woman reigned;
And yet the man himself was king.
Pray how was this attained?

The wife, who seemed submission's self,
And did her wifely part,
Queened it in an imperious way
Over her husband's heart.

Her chosen throne was in his home,
Her sceptre his dear will,
Her spotless robe and crown his love—
We see the picture still.

Yet like a king that held full sway,
He guarded well his own,
And loved his palace-home, made bright
By love, and love alone.

The children, by their mother led,
Her bright example saw,
Obedience seemed an easy thing,
And "father's word" was law.

Oh, what a pleasant thing to see,
Of all things to be seen,
A home where reigns with equal power
A household king and queen!

M. A. K.

BLUE-EYED MAY.—Your questions, for the most part, are too general to be simply or dogmatically answered. First of all you wish to know if a young lady may bow to a gentleman whom she only knows by sight. The answer depends upon the character and extent of her knowledge. If he has only been pointed out to her amongst a crowd of others at a public ball or meeting or place of public resort, such knowledge alone would not give her permission to bow; but if she has met him at a private party of any kind or in any select assembly her subsequent recognition might be deemed as graceful as it would be inobtrusive. Next as to your walking exercise. There can be no objection, on the score of propriety, to your walking in public thoroughfares without a companion, provided such walks are taken in the morning or afternoon, but something might be said against your walking alone during twilight or in the evening. The you ask how you are to answer a flatterer whom you dislike. Your answer should not be measured by your dislike, which on examination might turn out to be capricious; but the answer should depend upon the fact whether or no the gentleman uses flattery in the worst sense of the term and intends so to use it. If he be one who endeavours to gain favours by artful obsequiousness the basis of which is untruth, an expression of seriousness and rebuke would suffice your face as you coldly tell him he has made a mistake; but if he only means to soothe you, while under the influence of some disappointment or accident, the tone in which you objected to his praises would assume a more gracious form. The fourth question can be categorically answered. Your handwriting is very good and, though we dislike this mode of expression, we suppose we must say it is ladylike. Fifth—You should have a good judgment, perhaps in your case we ought to say instinct, and use it well before you ask a strange gentleman who happens to sit next to you at a theatre for the loan of his opera-glass. Such a proceeding on your part breaks the ice, and if you do not then find yourself in a dangerous position it will be owing to the presence of some friend of yours or the stranger's right notion. There are, you know, gentlemen and gentlemen, though happily both classes are chivalrously disposed towards good girls like you. Sixth—When you write anything you wish to be printed you should write only on one side of the paper, that is, leave the second page blank. On other occasions the length of the letter often governs

the practice. A short note is often written on the first and third pages, while in a long epistle every page is filled.

STORM JIM, who would make a good husband, would like to meet a young woman who is fond of home, good looking, loving and dark.

ROYAL SHEET, medium height, dark hair and eyes, and loving, would like to correspond with a young lady who is dark, domesticated and could love a sailor.

J. A., thirty-four, a tall, dark, gentlemanly, industrious and affectionate widower, wishes to correspond with one of our lady readers with a view to matrimony.

S. J. E., eighteen, fair, loving, and domesticated, desires to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, about twenty-five; a clerk preferred.

NESBITT FAN, twenty, a brunette, and poetical, desires to correspond with a young man about twenty-five, of refined tastes and intelligent mind.

G. L., twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., in the navy, but about to leave, fair complexion, black hair and eyes, and has saved a little money. Respondent should be loving and fond of home; a country girl preferred.

BAUNER, twenty, 5ft. 7in., a sailor, dark complexion, and good looking, wishes to correspond with a young lady between eighteen and twenty, who is good looking, loving, and fond of home and music.

PROVINCIAL, twenty-two, tall, fair, handsome, and occupying a good position, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen, tall, fair, good looking and a fine figure.

M. F., thirty-six, medium height, dark complexion, and a farmer's daughter, would like to correspond with a gentleman of means. She would make a good wife to a steady, respectable man from thirty-eight to fifty.

ANNA, twenty-eight, tall, dark, tolerably good looking, loving, domesticated, and would make a good wife, would like to correspond with a tall, fair, blue-eyed gentleman over thirty; a tradesman preferred.

FLEURBAES, twenty-two, petite, brown curly hair, dark eyes, affectionate disposition, and fond of travelling, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, not too young, in a tolerably good position; one who thinks of going abroad to a warm climate preferred.

BLUE VOICE, twenty, tall, fair, gray eyes, light-brown hair, good tempered, very affectionate, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-five, tall, with dark curly hair and dark eyes; a mechanic preferred.

STANLEY, twenty, 5ft. 10in., fair, good looking, good musician, fond of home, affectionate, and a tradesman, wishes to correspond with a young lady about his own age, fair, good looking, fond of home, loving and acquainted with music.

POOR POLI would like to correspond with a man of common sense tastes, and whose chief happiness must be derived from doing right. Any difference of opinion to be balanced by charity. She is rather tall, good looking, and is thirty-three.

RICHARD E., a seaman, who has been abroad, but having some money would like to settle down in London or a little way out of town. He is twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, hazel eyes, curly hair, and would like to meet with a young woman of medium height, dark, and dressmaker.

ROBERT P., about to leave the navy, wishes to go into business provided he can succeed in getting a partner for life. He is twenty-five, 5ft. 5in., of dark complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, has a little money, and is fond of home. Respondent must be loving, dark, of medium height, and domesticated.

BOWMAN OF THE DANCING BEAUTY, twenty-four, 5ft. 6in., dark curly hair, blue eyes, just returned from a foreign station, about to leave the service and settle down in a quiet life, fond of home and children, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty, good looking, domesticated, and able to love a true blue from the bottom of her heart.

MADRICKE, thirty, 5ft. 6in., fair, light-blue eyes, good looking, an artist, and a sergeant in the army at present stationed at Gibraltar, who is about to return to England and take his discharge, has been near ten years abroad in different climes and seen a great deal of the world, would like to correspond with a good looking and well educated young lady, who is affectionate, fond of home, and has a little money.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

BLUE AND WHITE is responded to by—"Theo T." twenty-four, medium height, fair, handsome and accomplished.

EARLY BY—"J. S.", dark, good looking, fond of home, a tradesman, and thinks he is all she requires.

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